
MORE
FOR WOMEN OF STYLE AND SUBSTANCE
JUL/AUG 2015
VOL. 18 NO. 6
CHANGE ONE SMALL HABIT CHANGE YOUR HEALTH
37 WAYS TO LIVE A MORE MEANINGFUL LIFE
BEAUTY PROS COME TO YOU WE RATE NEW AT-HOME SERVICES
THE CHICEST NEW ACCESSORY AND HOW TO WEAR IT
MICHELLE OBAMA GUEST-EDITS MORE!
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PHOTOS, FROM LEFT: WILLIAM ABRANOWICZ; DAVID SLIJPER; PAUL JUNG


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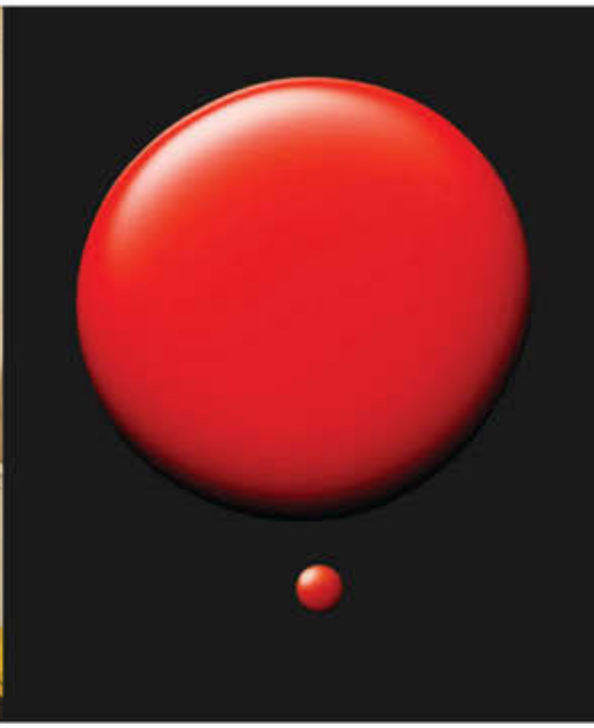
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PHOTOS, FROM LEFT: MARKUS ZIEGLER. OFFICIAL WHITE HOUSE PHOTO BY SAMANTHA APPLETON. KENJI AOKI


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GUEST EDITOR'S

LETTER



The balancing act

* * *

JUST DAYS after my family moved to Washington back in 2009, my daughters started their first day at their new schools. I went with Malia, my mother accompanied Sasha, and as I watched my girls climb into those big black cars filled with agents with guns and saw Sasha's little face pressed against the window as her car pulled away, it hit me: What on earth were we doing?

What were Barack and I doing to our daughters? What were we doing to our marriage? Would they be OK? Would we be OK? At that moment, I made a promise to myself—and my girls—that I would do everything possible to make this disruption to their lives worthwhile.

That hasn't always been easy. As First Lady, you can get lost in all the ceremonial responsibilities or find yourself pulled in a million different directions because there's so much important work to do and it's hard to say no. But I realized that if I truly wanted to be both a good mother to my girls and a good First Lady for my country, I would have to choose my priorities and make some hard decisions to honor them.

My struggle is by no means unique. Every day, women—and, increasingly, men—across this country are juggling the needs of their families with the demands of their jobs, and they're asking themselves the very same questions: Is this really worth it? Is my family OK? Am I OK? For many of us, the answers to those questions change day by day, even hour by hour—and that can be stressful, confusing and exhausting.

I don't have any magic solutions, but I can tell you that the best thing I ever did was lay out clear criteria for how I would engage as First Lady and try hard to stick to them. Before working on any issue, I ask myself three core questions: First, is this something I'm truly passionate about, something that truly inspires me or infuriates me? Second, can I have an impact here—can I really move the needle? And third, will my work on this issue further my husband's vision and agenda? Because, let's face it, no one elected me—they elected him—and I want to ensure that my work complements and enhances his.

For each of my core initiatives—addressing childhood obesity; inspiring young people to pursue higher education; supporting and honoring our troops, veterans and military families; and expanding educational opportunities for girls internationally—I feel that I can answer a firm yes to these three questions. And that gives me a sense of clarity in times when I feel anxious or overwhelmed or wonder whether I'm fulfilling that promise I made to myself and my daughters six years ago.

It's still a constant balancing act. Like everyone else, I'm calibrating and recalibrating day by day as my girls grow up and I continue to grow into the role of First Lady. But I couldn't be more honored to have this opportunity to serve our country, and I am so excited to be guest editor of *More* this month and tell you a little bit about the issues I'm working on and the extraordinary Americans I've had the privilege of meeting as First Lady.

Michelle Obama

INSTAGRAM: @MICHELLEOBAMA TWITTER: @FLOTUS

PHOTOGRAPHED BY *David Slijper*


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MRS. OBAMA and I at an American Embassy reception in Cambodia. I'm wearing a dress I bought at the night market in Siem Reap.

The Inspirer-in-Chief

THE FIRST LADY of the United States and the First Lady of Cambodia sit in a high school classroom in the city of Siem Reap surrounded by girls in uniforms. Each girl stands and recites the daily obstacles she faced in trying to get an education before she attended this government-subsidized boarding school. An aspiring mathematician awoke at 4 AM to milk cows and cook rice for the family, then biked an hour to class. A would-be doctor couldn't study biology at a hospital because it was too far from home. Other barriers, faced by many, were financial (e.g., lacking the money for the required uniforms) and cultural (being girls in a country where boys are more valued).

First Lady Michelle Obama, aka FLOTUS, is in this room because she has traveled halfway around the world—and I've followed her!—to draw attention to **Let Girls Learn**, a government-wide, global program to get girls into secondary school and keep them there. Starting in 11 countries, LGL will operate through community-based forces already on the ground, most notably the Peace Corps. The reason this initiative is essential: Studies show that educated girls are at lower risk for sex trafficking, sexual abuse and poverty; they raise a country's GNP and increase its overall peace and security.

Though I've watched FLOTUS in glamorous circumstances (such as the *More* cover shoot), I don't really get her until I hear her tell these girls that growing up, she was just like them. "There are going to be people who aren't going to be happy that you're so smart and strong and capable," she says. "It happened to me when I was your age. There were people who told me that I wasn't smart enough to go to college and law school—but I ignored them. And I want you to ignore them, too." Suddenly I realize: FLOTUS is a kind of benevolent fly fisherman—casting a line of hope to girls at home and around the world, using the story of her own upward climb to hook them into achieving more. Watching, I remember what she told me a few weeks earlier at the White House: "I am always . . . one of these kids sitting here, with dreams and not a whole lot of resources but really a belief in my own capability . . . And I have always felt like I had an obligation to reach back and help others. It's hard to sit in this place and forget where you came from."

Now, back in New York City, I'm officially changing Mrs. Obama's title from First Lady to Inspirer-in-Chief. Her gift for moving people to action is the reason I invited her to be *More*'s first-ever guest editor—because she is someone uniquely suited to motivate our accomplished readers to have more impact on the world. And in this unprecedented, even historic issue, she has delivered, working her magic on every page. (The only exception: the fashion and beauty stories, where—despite her talent for looking great—Mrs. Obama deferred to the *More* team's choices.) As you read, I hope you'll find yourself deciding to make a difference of your own in one or more of the areas she highlights. To help, we've provided suggestions in the form of "How You Can Have More Impact" boxes throughout the issue.

After FLOTUS left Cambodia, I took a trip to the famous Siem Reap floating village, a community that lives and works in the middle of the city's river. At a school for young children, a five-year-old girl in a pink nightgown grabbed my pinkie and walked me to a deserted area. "For a dollar I give love!" she said, pointing to the ground. Pretending not to understand, I took her to rejoin her classmates—then found myself holding back tears during the 20-minute tuk-tuk ride to my hotel. That day, I realized more profoundly than ever before that the world needs to let girls learn.

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The making of the July/August issue

Behind the scenes with *More* and the First Lady

HOW DID WE secure Mrs. Obama as our guest editor? What was it like to collaborate with the White House? Answers to those questions and more are in this insider's video (stills above), along with a tour of *More*'s offices and a backstage view of our cover shoot with FLOTUS. Go to more.com/behindthescenes to watch.

ANOTHER ONLINE EXCLUSIVE: See photos from editor-in-chief Lesley Jane Seymour's trip to Southeast Asia as she followed the First Lady in support of the **Let Girls Learn** initiative, at storify.com/moremag/followflotus.

TELL US HOW YOU'LL HAVE #MOREIMPACT

IN THIS ISSUE, you'll meet women who are saving the lives of children (page 112), advocating for female entrepreneurship (page 52) and promoting the education of women and girls worldwide (page 8).

To celebrate their impact, we're taking action—and we want you to join us. After you read the issue, commit to making a difference in the world around you. Maybe you'll tutor underprivileged children . . . volunteer to feed the homeless . . . mentor a woman starting a business.

(Need ideas? Watch for the "How You Can Have More Impact" boxes throughout this issue.)

On Instagram, post a photo that shows how you plan to change the world (for example, a picture of the river you want to clean up or the school you volunteer at).

Be sure to include the hashtag **#MoreImpact** and tag **@MoreMag**.

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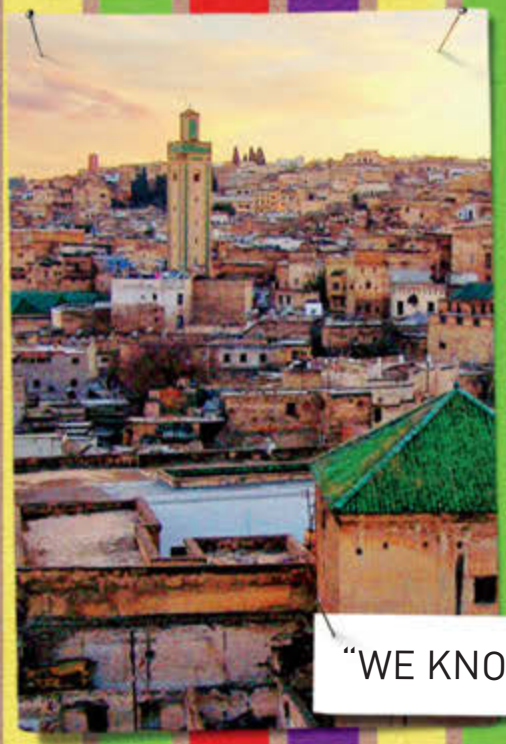
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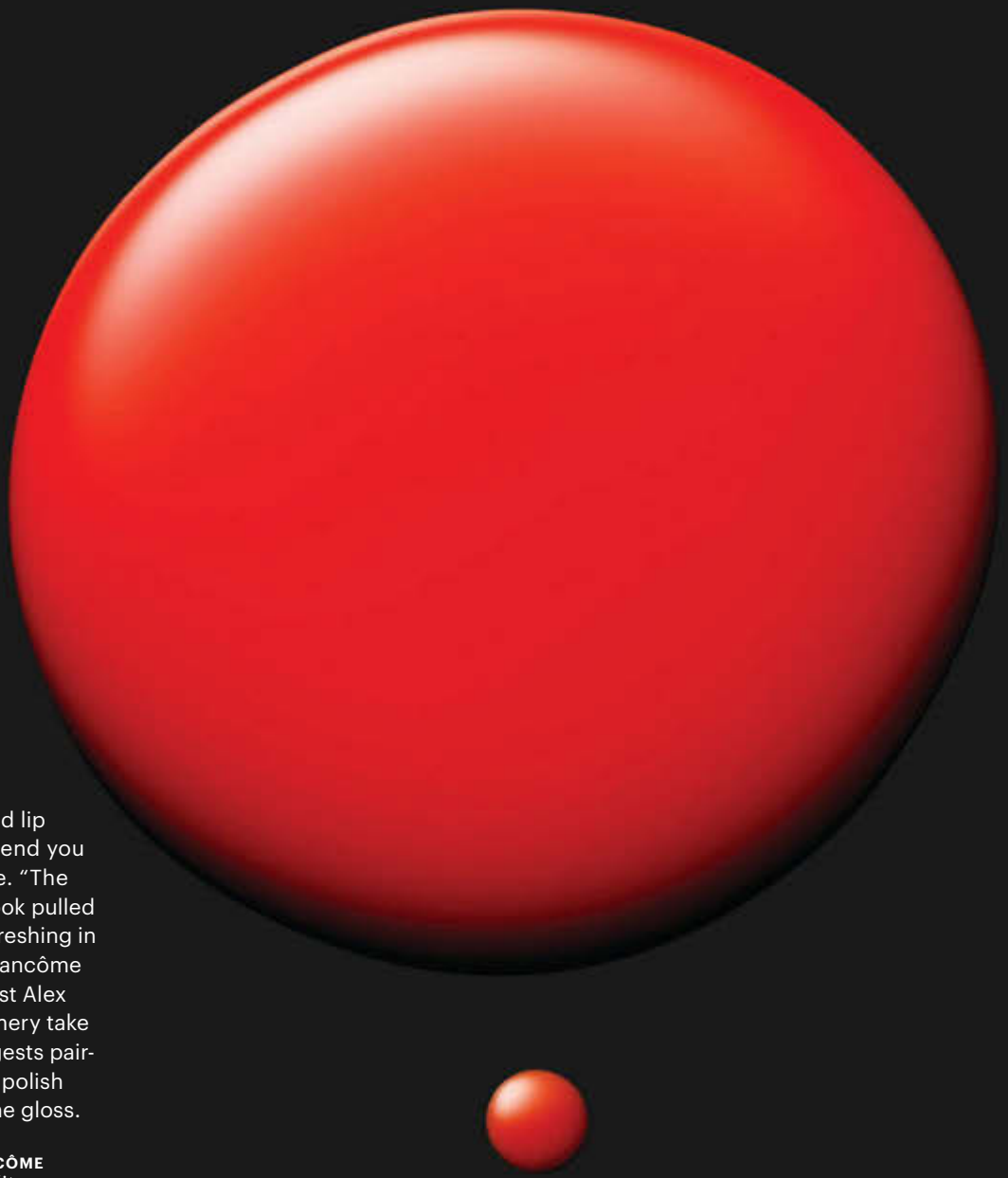


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BEST OF THE BEST

NAIL TO THE CHIEF

This sandal season, borrow a style tip from our perfectly polished FLOTUS and have *fun* with mani-pedis! Here, summer's three prettiest palettes



1

MATCHMAKER

Coordinating nail and lip colors is a runway trend you can adopt in real life. "The combo makes you look pulled together, and it's refreshing in its simplicity," says Lancôme national makeup artist Alex Sanchez. For a summery take on the style, he suggests pairing this orangey-red polish with a deep-tangerine gloss.

TOP AND BOTTOM: LANCÔME *Nail Vernis in Ocre Mediterranee*; **LANCÔME COUNTERS. NOT SHOWN: LANCÔME** *Shine Lover Lipstick in Coral Lover*; **LANCOME.COM.**

PHOTOGRAPHED BY *Kenji Aoki*



2

NEUTRAL TERRITORY

Understated shades are unexpected and a refreshing change for summer. "Who says everyone has to wear bright pink when it's hot out?" asks Deborah Lippmann, who designed the muted collection here. Of course, the First Lady flaunted the fad first. After she sported a gray gel manicure at the 2012 Democratic National Convention, interest in the color spiked by 90 percent.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: DEBORAH LIPPMANN *Desert Moon*; *Love in the Dunes*; *All About That Base*; **DEBORAHLIPPMANN.COM.**

3

BLUE CRUSH

Need a mental vacation? Just look down. These pedi-appropriate Caribbean hues evoke bright skies and gentle waves—and they flatter all skin tones. "To give the look a little extra edge, affix a simple gold stud to the center of your big toe," suggests Sally Hansen nail ambassador Tracylee.

FROM TOP: SALLY HANSEN *Velvet Texture in Plush*; **DRUGSTORES. OPI** *I Sea You Wear OPI*; **DRUGSTORES. CHANEL** *Mediterranée*; **CHANEL.COM. ESSIE** *Make Some Noise*; **ESSIE.COM.**



APPROACHES TO BROOCHES

They're back in fashion and chic in a bevy of classic styles. Yes, it's time to get pinned



1

CROSS TO WEAR

The Maltese cross has offered design inspiration since the 16th century. This stand-alone version makes a statement, and though it would look gorgeous on any lapel, we'd also love to see it embellish the waistband of a dress or skirt.

DAVID WEBB *18k gold and platinum brooch with white enamel, coral, cabochon sapphire and diamonds*; **DAVIDWEBB.COM.**

PHOTOGRAPHED BY *Kenji Aoki*



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2

HEAVY MEDAL

Military-badge-inspired brooches have been updated with precious metals and intricate stonework. We like them best when they're clustered in a group for maximum impact (on the shoulder, at the collar) and recommend you opt for an odd number held together visually by shape or color.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: **OSCAR DE LA RENTA** *resin and gold-plated brass brooch*; 212-288-5810. **BEN-AMUN** *24k gold–plated brooch with glass pearls and baroque pearl*; BEN-AMUN.COM. **KENNETH JAY LANE** *22k gold–plated brooch with crystals and resin*; 877-953-5264. **OSCAR DE LA RENTA** *crystal and metal brooch*; 212-288-5810. **R.J. GRAZIANO** *gold-plated brooch with resin*; RJGRAZIANO.COM.



3

SHINING STAR

The Victorian era was known for its beautiful brooches, and this circa-1890 piece is a stunning example. Made with 9.2 carats of old-mine diamonds, it cries out to be pinned on just about anything. It's also built with a loop so it can be strung on a chain and worn as a necklace.

FRED LEIGHTON *vintage 9.2-carat diamond brooch*; **212-288-1872.** For prices and links to products, go to more.com/wheretobuy.

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Beauty
HOUSE CALLS

Make like a VIP and score salon services at home. All you need: an app to hook you up with a pro. We test the latest options

BY ALANA PEDEN

PHOTO: MICHAEL DAVID ADAMS/THELICENSINGPROJECT.COM

WHILE THE NEW beauty-concierge apps seem like an answer to the prayers of time-strapped women, we were skeptical about the cost,* reliability and whether the pros who arrived would really be salon-level talent. So seven *More* reporters across the country gave these new apps a go. Here's the dish on their doorstep deliveries.

Glamsquad

WHERE AVAILABLE Los Angeles; Miami; New York City.
POPULAR SERVICES Blowout ($50), makeup application ($75), braid ($75), updo ($85 and up).
THE REQUEST Blowout and makeup application in New York City ($125).
THE RESULT "With a rock concert on my evening agenda, I asked for a smoky eye, nude lip and smooth blow-dry," says our New York City reporter. "Glamsquad dispatched separate pros for hair and makeup, which shaved minutes off the total appointment time, since they worked simultaneously. The makeup expert applied false lashes—which I loved—and a very flattering neutral lip color. I wish I'd noted the brand and shade for future reference; it stayed put through several vodka sodas! I was less than wowed, however, by the hairstyling. That pro seemed a little inexperienced styling my type of coarse, ethnic hair, and the blowout looked fuzzier than the sleek, smooth look I was after."
BOTTOM LINE "I learned after the fact that when booking your appointment, you can use the 'Notes' section to describe your hair type or any other personal details that seem pertinent. That helps Glamsquad select a pro who will meet your specific needs."

Zeel

WHERE AVAILABLE Long Island, New York; Los Angeles; Miami; New York City; northern New Jersey; Palm Beach, Florida; Palm Springs, California; San Francisco.
POPULAR SERVICES Customizable massages ($99 and up). No hair or makeup services.
THE REQUEST A 60-minute massage in Los Angeles ($99).
THE RESULT "The masseuse quickly set up her portable table in my living room and got to work," says our L.A. reporter. "I loved the oils she used and the way she kneaded away tension through pressure points on my feet. What happened after the massage may have been the best part. Instead of dressing and jumping into my car, I sat dreamily on my own couch, savoring the blissed-out effect of the rubdown."
BOTTOM LINE "What happened after the massage may have been the best part. Instead of quickly dressing and jumping into my car, I simply sat dreamily on my own couch, savoring the blissed-out effect of the rubdown."

> **"What happened** after the massage may have been the best part. Instead of dressing and jumping into my car, I sat dreamily on my own couch."

Priv

WHERE AVAILABLE Los Angeles; New York City; London.
POPULAR SERVICES Blowout ($50), brow shaping ($40), haircut ($75), makeup application ($75), personal training ($80), massage ($45 and up), manicure ($35), spray tan ($60), men's grooming ($25 and up).
THE REQUEST Manicure with nail art in New York City ($45; the nail art was an extra $10).
THE RESULT "I had an evening event—and chipped polish—so I booked the pro for a same-day appointment at my office," says one of our New York City reporters. "I also booked a vacant conference room for the appointment, so as not to disturb my coworkers. After a heavenly hand massage, the manicurist used OPI's deep-plum Lincoln Park After Dark [*$8; drugstores*] as a base hue, then painted a crescent moon onto my nail beds with OPI's taupe polish You Don't Know Jacques! [*$8; drugstores*]."
BOTTOM LINE "The manicurist was discreet and worked quickly, and my nails looked chic for the evening event. Having her come to the office saved me time, too, as I didn't have to duck out for an hour and go to a salon—a plus that helped me justify the price tag."

Vênsette

WHERE AVAILABLE Los Angeles; Miami; New York City; San Francisco; Silicon Valley; the Hamptons.
POPULAR SERVICES Blowout ($100), makeup application ($150), blowout plus makeup ($200—a $50 saving when you get both).
THE REQUEST Makeup application in San Francisco ($150).
THE RESULT "I was headed to a dinner party and asked for black mascara, smoky eyes and dramatic brown lipstick," says one of our San Francisco reporters. "From start to finish, I felt as if I were being readied for the red carpet. The makeup artist began by mixing a personalized-for-my-skin foundation shade; it made my complexion look flawless. Next came a generous dusting of gray shadow across my lids and several coats of mascara. Finally, the artist used a wide lip pencil, instead of lipstick, on my mouth. The color lasted for hours but didn't feel too dry. However, the overall result was more dramatic than I'd envisioned. I live in California, where less is more, and I felt overdone."
BOTTOM LINE "I should have explained my needs more clearly. Even though you're

working with beauty pros, you can't expect them to read your mind; speak up to share what you love and loathe. And remember, having a celeb photo on hand as a model never hurts."

BeGlammed

WHERE AVAILABLE Austin; Dallas–Fort Worth; Houston; Las Vegas; Los Angeles; New York City; Orange County, California.
POPULAR SERVICES Makeup application ($75), blowout ($60), blowout plus makeup ($125), updo ($75), makeup touch-up ($30 as an add-on to hair service). Prices may vary slightly from city to city.
THE REQUEST Blowout plus makeup application in Houston ($125).
THE RESULT "One pro arrived to do both hair and makeup, and I asked for a natural, Reese Witherspoon–like look," says our Texas reporter. "She was able to coax my thick, coarse hair into pretty, tousled waves—a lot better than I could have done on my own—but her true talent was makeup. She worked miracles with my complexion, making it look glowy but not too dewy. Her secret weapon: MAC Duo Fibre Face Brush [*$42; maccosmetics.com*], which she used to carefully stipple on both my foundation and concealer."
BOTTOM LINE "Getting gussied up at home felt luxurious, and the result surpassed my usual DIY. But the price tag, I think, makes it a special-occasion-only indulgence."

Stylisted

WHERE AVAILABLE Chicago; Los Angeles; New York City.
POPULAR SERVICES Blowout (average cost: $40), makeup application (average cost: $60); prices vary by stylist and city.
THE REQUEST A blowout and makeup application at 6 AM in Chicago ($250; the pro I selected was at the higher end of the pay scale).
THE RESULT "I had an early-morning TV gig and was worried, given the hour, that the expert might be late," says our Midwest reporter. "But she showed up 10 minutes early, which put me at ease. She then obliged when I wanted to use my own tinted moisturizer rather than the foundation she'd brought. Her professionalism relaxed me so much that I allowed her to apply false lashes, something I normally skip. Good call—the individual lashes she applied at the outer corners of my eyes made me look wide-awake on TV later on. My only criticism: She styled my hair a little too tousled and sexy for morning TV, so after she left, I brushed it out a bit."
BOTTOM LINE "Stylisted's review system allows users to evaluate the pros they hire, so next time I'll check the comments for someone with a more natural styling approach."

StyleBee

WHERE AVAILABLE Los Angeles; San Francisco; Scottsdale, Arizona.
POPULAR SERVICES Blowout ($50), makeup application ($85), updo ($85), men's haircut ($50).
THE REQUEST Blowout plus makeup application in San Francisco ($135).
THE RESULT "I asked for fresh, daytime makeup and a soft, bouncy blowout," says another San Francisco reporter. "From the start, I warned the pro that I hate heavy makeup. He adapted immediately and used a light touch, allowing my freckles to show through. For my hair, he used the same approach, going easy on product but wielding the blow-dryer like a master. My hair looked sensational, and the blowout lasted for days."
BOTTOM LINE "The day of the appointment, StyleBee called and asked if they could push back the appointment time by 15 minutes; in return, $25 was subtracted from my bill, which seemed fair. Of course, if I'd been on a tight schedule, a delay would have been problematic. So in the future, I'll play it safe by scheduling my appointments 15 minutes earlier than I need them."

**Most apps automatically add a gratuity of 18 to 20 percent to the cost of your service, then charge your credit card. Typically, cash does not change hands at the appointment.*

PREPPING FOR YOUR PRO

TO ENSURE that your session goes smoothly, we asked top celeb pros (who make house calls regularly) to share their best setup instructions.

WASH UP BEFOREHAND "Hair should be freshly cleaned and damp when the hairstylist arrives," says pro Sarah Potempa, who has styled Mindy Kaling's hair. Your face should be clean, too, says makeup artist Carl Ray, whose clients include Gabrielle Union and Claire Danes. "If you do have makeup on, I'll just cleanse your face and go from there, but that does make the appointment take longer," he explains.

OFFER A VISUAL "Pictures help. They give you a sense of what look the client would like," says Johnny Wright, style director at SoftSheen-Carson and the pro who coifs Tamron Hall of *Today*. That said, it should be understood that photos aren't instructions, he adds; they're a dialogue starter, because your hair type and facial structure affect how well a look can be duplicated on you. The same is true of makeup, says Ray: "If you have an inspiration shot, I would like to see it. It helps ensure that the artist and the client are on the same page."

SET UP NEAR OUTLETS "Ideally, hairstylists would like to have access to three open outlets," says Potempa.

GO TO THE LIGHT For makeup application, brighter is better. "If it's daytime, set up near a window. If it's dark outside, find a spot with adequate lighting," says makeup artist Tim Quinn, a VP for Giorgio Armani Beauty, who counts Dr. Jill Biden among his clients.

CHOOSE YOUR CHAIR WITH CARE "For hairstyling, the height of a kitchen chair is best," says Potempa. "For makeup, a higher barstool is nice."

YOUR NEXT WHITE SHIRT

THE CLASSICISM IS ENDURING, BUT AN EVOLUTION IS AFOOT. HERE, THREE NEW TAKES ON THE BEST BASIC BUTTON-DOWN IN THE BUSINESS

STYLED BY JONNY LICHTENSTEIN



BEST IN DRESS

So simple yet so stylish, and with a history that runs parallel to America's. "The white shirt was co-opted from English riding habits," says Patricia Mears, deputy director at the Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology. "Then, during the Industrial Revolution, manufacturers figured out how to make shirts in quantity. It was the genesis of the ready-to-wear market, an American invention." Today's versions are artful, with interesting shapes (long and slim, boxy and cropped), dramatic details and even a new take on the shirtdress (left).

MAISON MARGIELA *coat and cotton dress*; **212-989-7612.**

HAIR: TOMOYUKI TAMURA; MAKEUP: FUMIAKI NAKAGAWA USING CHANEL AT THE WALL GROUP; MANICURE: CASANDRA LAMAR USING DIOR VERNIS/CAKE BEAUTY; MODEL: BEKAH AT ONE MANAGEMENT

PHOTOGRAPHED BY *Marcus Ziegler*


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FIT TO BE TIED

A clean, collarless shirt gets a dramatic boost from a wide, ankle-length sash. We love this over a midi skirt, and we'd also love it over pants (skinny or full). "Designers continue to mold and manipulate the white shirt," says Mears. "What started as something very utilitarian evolved into something fashionable. It becomes particularly modern when it is infused with feminine details."

THE ROW *poplin shirt, silk skirt and poplin sash*; **NET-A-PORTER.COM.**



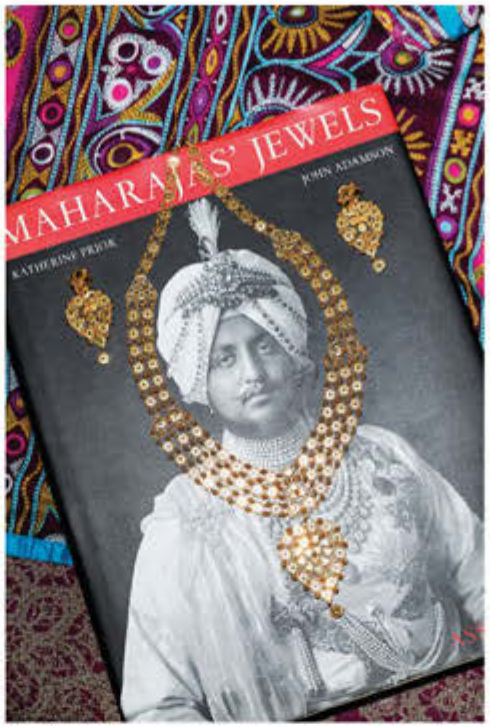
LAYER TAKE

New this season: the white shirt as a layering piece, a backdrop for color or texture, a play on proportion or all three (like the black demi apron over the shirtdress at left). "The white shirt has been embraced by everyone from Gibson girls to suffragettes to Hollywood starlets," says Mears. "It's one of the most American pieces of clothing I can think of."

PETER SOM *cotton shirtdress and apron skirt*; **PETERSOM.COM.**

For prices and links to products, go to more.com/wheretobuy.





INDIAN women receive jewelry sets for every special occasion—birth, graduation, wedding—so they tend to amass a collection (near left and below). "We're always thinking about jewelry, no matter what we wear," Bajaria says.





NOT ALL saris serve the same function; the fuchsia version on Bajaria (above) would be worn to a formal event. Bajaria's mother brought back this heavily embroidered dress (right) from India. "My mother does a lot of shopping for me when she goes home," Bajaria says. "I'm lucky."

A cultural collaboration

BELA BAJARIA

THERE'S A uniform among top female television executives in Los Angeles: power suits by day, black column dresses by night. But Bela Bajaria, head of Universal Television, writes her own style script.

Bajaria, the daughter of Indian immigrants, is responsible for some of the most critically praised shows on the air (*Parks and Recreation*, *The Mindy Project*, *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt*). And in an industry where appearances play a major role, Bajaria's East-meets-West style makes a statement. An orange sheath accessorized with multiple enamel bracelets? Yes. A sari on the red carpet? Absolutely. "I've been figuring out how to blend cultures from a very young age," she says. "I like to represent my heritage. You should see the emails I get: 'I saw you in a sari at the Emmys!' People love it."

In her home, I make a beeline for a rack of hangers dripping with saris, all saturated with color and intricately beaded, and I (barely) resist the urge to put one on. In the next room, a dining table is covered with trays of necklace-and-earring sets in gold and colored stones and with enough bangles to bling out half the wrists in Hollywood. "Even when I wear something very simple, like a little black dress, I'll use Indian accessories and lots of jewelry," she says. "Indians feel that more is more!" –**SUSAN SWIMMER**

HAIR: TIFFANY GREEN; MAKEUP: KRISTENE BERNARD USING GIORGIO ARMANI; PROP STYLIST: NATALIE SHRIVER AT ZENOBIA AGENCY

PHOTOGRAPHED BY *The Collaborationist*

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The treasures of America

BY MICHELLE OBAMA

HALLS OF HISTORY The First Lady with a park ranger during a 2014 visit to Monroe Elementary School. Once one of the black-only schools in Topeka, it is now a national historic site.

HERE I AM (above) in Topeka, Kansas, at the *Brown v. Board of Education* National Historic Site, which is part of America's vast and diverse National Park System. The sites are over 400 strong, from the White House to the redwood forests to the battlefields of Gettysburg. As First Lady, I have the privilege of serving as honorary cochair of the centennial of the National Park Service, and I try to visit as many of the park sites as possible. Here, a few of my favorites. **Monroe Elementary School** Last year was the 60th anniversary of the Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, so we came here, to one of the schools in the city that were integrated as a result of the ruling. On this day I had the opportunity to visit the site and then to deliver a speech to graduating seniors at a local high school. At a time when many take diversity for granted, I think every young person needs to be reminded of what public education used to look like in America and how far we've come. **Mount Rushmore** This inspiring monument makes us reflect on great leaders and the ideals they stood for, ideals that still animate our nation. This was supposed to be a quick pit stop on the way to California, but we were completely enamored with it. You see Mount Rushmore in photos, but nothing compares to its majesty when you see it in person. **Grand Canyon** Barack and I had always wanted the girls to see the Grand Canyon. It's hard to describe the depth of its beauty and the sense of awe I felt when I stepped out onto that viewing ledge. **USS *Arizona*, Pearl Harbor** The ship and harbor, in Oahu, Hawaii, are a solemn reminder that the freedoms so many of us take for granted come at a great cost: They are won and preserved by the sacrifice of our men and women in uniform and their families. **Old Faithful** The morning we were to visit Yellowstone National Park, we got an email that said "uncooperative geyser." There's something refreshing about the fact that while we humans can and must live our lives around a schedule, nature won't necessarily play along.

OFFICIAL WHITE HOUSE PHOTO BY CHUCK KENNEDY


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Mustard greens

BY AMANDA HESSER AND MERRILL STUBBS

WE HAVE two trends to thank for the recent interest in mustard greens: the passion for kale and America's recently acquired taste for bitterness. But how many kale salads can we eat, really? (We won't answer that.) When looking for the next best vegetable, people kept it in the family and started playing with another brassica: mustard greens. Just like kale and other dark greens, mustard greens are good for us. They're anti-inflammatory and loaded with compounds that scientists say might lower cholesterol and protect against cancer. (These leaves should wear superhero capes.)

But where mustard greens stand alone is in their peppery and bitter punch. Bitterness is finally being embraced in everything from Campari to salads, and it is cropping up on restaurant menus everywhere. By employing all the tricks we've learned from other leafy greens, we can make mustard greens a memorable, flavorful part of home-cooked meals. (Go to food52.com to see recipes.) Some ideas: Braise them and add them to frittatas and grilled cheese sandwiches; bake them into chips; or, as Bryant Terry shows us in his cookbook *Afro-Vegan*, make a batch of mustard-sharp green harissa.

PHOTOGRAPHED BY *Gentl & Hyers*



today at canyon ranch

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Water works

BY AMANDA HESSER AND MERRILL STUBBS

WE'LL NEVER say no to water with lemon and mint or cucumber (see a glassful, left), but we like to savor summer's bounty while we can. Embrace root-to-stalk drinking and put the leftover strawberry hulls from your latest tart or crisp to good use by adding the rinsed strawberry tops—along with some mint or basil—to a large jar filled with water. After an hour or so, you'll have a softly infused, fruity drink. The water will be lightly sweet but not sugary, so you won't get the calories, sugar or caffeine hit that soda might provide. There are even water bottles with inner infusion baskets to hold fruit and herbs, so you can drink energizing, totally tasty water during an afternoon slump.

Bartenders, too, are turning to water for lighter, low-proof drink options. We're happy to see the wine spritzers of yesteryear—in which seltzer or club soda is added to white wine—getting makeovers on restaurant and bar menus. Here's our great variation: a spritzer of dry rosé, soda water and strawberry puree. The result is refreshing enough for brunch and remarkable enough to drink all summer. It's the perfect hot-weather plan, if you ask us: strawberry-top-infused water during the day and a strawberry-spritzer sundowner.

THE DRINK UP CAMPAIGN is run by the Partnership for a Healthier America (the First Lady is honorary chair), which works with the private sector to urge us all to drink more of what is good for us—water, still or bubbly, tap or bottled. One sign of success: From the end of 2013 to mid-2014, U.S. consumption increased by 68 million servings.

AMANDA HESSER and **MERRILL STUBBS** are cofounders of the website dedicated to all things kitchen and home, *food52.com*.

FOOD STYLIST: EUGENE JHO FOR PLUM REPS; PROP STYLIST: LINDEN ELSTRAN

PHOTOGRAPHED BY *James Wojcik*

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THE KEY TO FUND RAISING: JUST ASK

WHAT'S THE biggest myth about fund raising? "That the person asking for money is the supplicant and the one with the money holds all the power," says Debra Eschmeyer, cofounder of FoodCorps, a nonprofit that connects kids to healthy food in schools. "It is really the person with the passion, who is dreaming big and thinking up a new solution to a social ill, who holds the cards. True fund raising is about finding people who share your passion."

It was Eschmeyer's passion that helped FoodCorps expand to 500 schools in 17 states—and won her notice from the White House, which this year named her executive director of ***Let's Move!*** and senior policy adviser for nutrition. "If you create genuine relationships, you'll be a good fund raiser," says Eschmeyer. "At FoodCorps, they called me the 'CEO of exponential relationships' because I believed our success depended on *all* sectors—corporate, government, nonprofit."

While at FoodCorps, she followed a methodical process to raise money: Find out who was funding programs with similar aims, then pick up the phone. "It is that simple. You just have to be fearless and ask for a meeting," Eschmeyer says. Before any face-to-face, she would jot down five points to discuss, but she spent most of her time listening. "I wanted to find out what they cared about and see if we had a commonality," she says. "If I were in a position to write a $500, $5,000 or $5 million check, what would I feel good about investing in? I asked what success looked like to them—and then I could answer honestly whether we should combine forces." —**RORY EVANS**

How to bring your values to your job

FOR HELENA Foulkes, the effects of cigarettes are personal: Her mother, who had been a smoker and then quit, died of lung cancer six years ago. "Watching someone go through that is a horrible experience," Foulkes says. Which is part of the reason the CVS Health executive vice president and mother of four spearheaded the retailer's gutsy decision last September to stop selling tobacco. How did she align her own values with those of her company? Simple, Foulkes says: "I relied on four things. I call them my leadership philosophies."

1

START FROM A SENSE OF PURPOSE "Purpose-driven decisions will carry you further in the long run. For years we talked about it at CVS: There's a conflict between tobacco and our business. Here we are selling health-related products, and tobacco is not that. A couple of years ago, we started working on our mission statement, or purpose, so we could use it as a filter for other decisions. Helping people on their path to better health—that's what we came up with. We were talking to big health insurance plans and drug groups, and it was all going great about the purpose, and then someone would ask, 'Well, that's good and all, but then why do you sell tobacco?' "

2

GO BIG OR GO HOME "There were smaller versions of our tobacco decision—but I felt we had to be all in to make the biggest impact and have the clearest message. Know what you want to accomplish, then go for it."

3

BE A MARATHONER "I love to run. Endurance sports aren't always fun along the way. But if you keep your eyes on the prize, you get long-term satisfaction. We sold roughly $2 billion a year in cigarettes, and we had a responsibility to our shareholders to drive up value. We realized if we looked five years ahead, there was more upside to the health care systems and doctors' networks that we worked with if we stopped selling tobacco. We said outright that there was not a short-term way to make up those sales. You just have to move forward and not give up."

4

PLAN FOR GREAT "Once we made the decision, we came together to execute it with tremendous attention to detail. While in retrospect it looks obvious, the amount of planning was huge. You should think through every aspect of the plan to the smallest detail—then prepare for the unexpected." —**BEE CHANG SHAPIRO**



$1.02 — Amount female millennials in New York make for every $1 earned by their male counterparts, according to a new study from the Institute for Women's Policy Research.

ILLUSTRATED BY *Michael Hoeweler*



Don't let anything stop you from starting that business

ANNE MAHLUM, 34, founded Back on My Feet, a nonprofit that uses running to boost self-worth and independence among the homeless. When her passion evolved a few years later, she quit to open the boutique fitness studio Solidcore. Her key to success: facing the hurdles head-on.

CHALLENGE Launching feels overwhelming.
STRATEGY Start small.
"People tell me, 'I would love to start something to, say, help underprivileged kids and teach music. How do I begin?' Well, go do it. Find one or two kids to help and start from there. My first notion for Back on My Feet was to just run with these homeless guys. The plan forms through doing."

CHALLENGE Finding funding is hard.
STRATEGY Look beyond the usual investors.
"I had no qualms about asking all my contacts and friends for $100 or $1,000. Most people don't give to the cause; they give to the person asking, so you have to be confident. I'd reach out by email, phone, in person."

CHALLENGE You still need an income.
STRATEGY Start a micro business.
"When I launched Back on My Feet, I didn't have a lot of savings, and I needed to pay rent. I couldn't take a salary, so I created a side marketing company and got two clients. It brought in $2,500 a month. I did the bare minimum: about 10 hours of work a week for six months, until I could afford to pay myself."

CHALLENGE It's tough to market.
STRATEGY Cater to the media.
"I was a blonde from North Dakota running with nine homeless men three days a week. Running didn't fit into the stereotype of a homeless person. The media gets pitched all the time. Pull out the human-interest story. Why is your story newsworthy or different?"

CHALLENGE You're a control freak.
STRATEGY Start a for-profit.
"With a nonprofit, you have to involve a board of directors. For Solidcore, I didn't want 14 people having a say over what I could do. I own it 100 percent." —**BEE CHANG SHAPIRO**



1,288

Number of **women launching businesses every day in the U.S.**, according to the American Express 2014 State of Women-Owned Businesses Report.

DISNEY CEO: "WHY I HIRE VETERANS"

IT'S ALWAYS BEEN my belief that hiring vets is the right thing to do. I now realize it is the smart thing to do, too.

We launched our Heroes Work Here initiative in 2012, hoping to hire 1,000 veterans by 2015. We blew through the goal in just a few months, partly because veterans—who possess leadership, problem-solving and teamwork skills—helped design and implement the program. Today we've welcomed more than 5,000 veterans into the Disney family.

We're sharing what we've learned with other companies through our Veterans Institute seminars. Businesses that have attended them reported hiring an additional 5,000 veterans. First Lady Michelle Obama was at our inaugural seminar. I'm grateful to her for starting a conversation about the challenges that vets transitioning into civilian life face—and how we can help. —**ROBERT A. IGER**

ROBERT A. IGER is chairman and chief executive officer of the Walt Disney Company.



HOW YOU CAN HAVE MORE IMPACT

HERE ARE JUST a few of the resources that can help you hire vets for your business:
→ The **Department of Labor** for a step-by-step guide to hiring vets (dol.gov/vets/ahaw).
→ The **Small Business Administration** to learn about the various veteran-hiring laws (sba.gov/content/veterans-0).
→ **HireOurHeroes** to create your own vet-hiring initiative (hireourheroes.org/corporations).
→ **Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve** to learn the benefits of hiring National Guard and Reserve service members (esgr.mil).

ILLUSTRATED BY *Mikel Jaso*


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What do I look like, a lunatic? "
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Work with the highest standard. Find your CFP® pro at LETSMAKEAPLAN.ORG



Gadgets for your garden

1 **IF YOU'RE STARTING A PLOT** When you're planting a new garden, Edyn (above) can help. Just jam the sensor into the dirt, then check the app for information on which kinds of plants will thrive and when to plant the seeds. Edyn is also useful in an established garden: It tracks meteorological data to tell you how much to water and when to harvest. ***$100; edyn.com***

2 **IF YOU HAVE INDOOR PLANTS** Installing Parrot's Flower Power sensor is quick and simple: Just stick it in the soil of your potted plant. It identifies the plant, then provides tips such as when to water or repot and when to add fertilizer. ***$59; parrot.com***

3 **IF YOU'RE WATERING OUTDOORS** Droplet is a robot-like device that attaches to the end of your garden hose. Setup is easy: In the app, describe the plants you have and where they are. Droplet will pivot to each plant and deliver only as much water as necessary. ***$359; smartdroplet.com***

4 **IF YOU WANT HERBS AND SPICES** Growing fresh basil or thyme on your kitchen counter is easy with Click and Grow's herb garden. Plug it in and fill the water tank. The garden's GMO- and pesticide-free smart soil circulates nutrients, and a timer controls the built-in LED light. ***$100; clickandgrow.com*** —EMILY PRICE ***@Emily***

HOW THE INTERNET CAN HELP YOUR KID GET INTO COLLEGE

IF A HIGH SCHOOL counselor is hard to track down, blame it on her caseload: Nationally, the ratio of students to counselors is nearly 500 to 1. There's some state legislation in the works to improve that statistic, and First Lady Michelle Obama has repeatedly emphasized the crucial role counselors play. Until positions are added, students can maximize one-on-one meetings by preparing beforehand with these free mobile apps and websites.

PICK THE PERFECT SCHOOL The website Admitted.ly asks students about certain preferences, such as what kind of weather they like and how they spend their free time. Then it cross-references students' answers with their GPA and test scores to produce a list of schools they may find appealing, ranked by how likely they are to get in.

PREPARE FOR STANDARDIZED TESTS Edupath makes mobile apps with practice questions for the SAT and the ACT. The apps provide an extra dose of motivation by showing students what scores their top-choice schools require. Testive.com offers highly individualized SAT and ACT preparation: It chooses questions based on what the student has answered correctly or incorrectly to guarantee that she is always appropriately challenged.

NAIL THE ESSAY Zoomita.com's list of sample essays written by college students may spark some ideas, and Grammarly.com and Hemingwayapp.com can scan drafts for errors in grammar and spelling.

FIND FINANCIAL AID Under EDUCATION on the NerdWallet.com home page, you'll find a simple guide for completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). For more tools, including a cost calculator, visit ReachHigher.gov. —E.P.

PHOTOGRAPHED BY *Sun Lee*

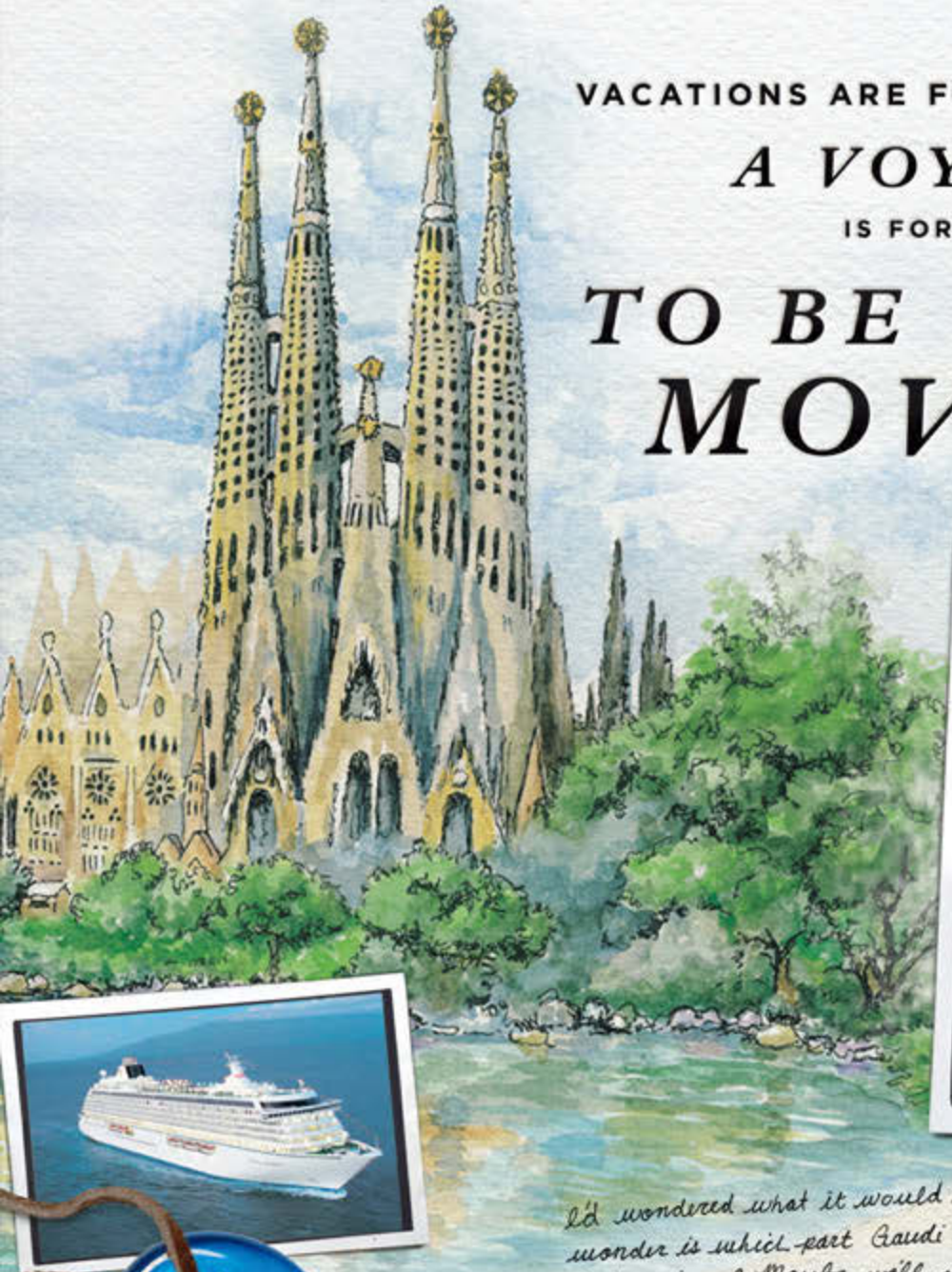
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PHOTO: TRUNK ARCHIVE

Begins 12:00 p.m. ET 6/29/15 and ends 11:59 p.m. ET 7/29/15. MORE is conducting a crowdfunding campaign that allows you to purchase unique experiences. MORE will donate 80% of the first $1 million raised to Let Girls Learn; thereafter, MORE will donate 10% of the money raised to CARE. Open to legal residents of the 50 U.S. & D.C. 18+. Void where prohibited. For complete Terms and Conditions, visit more.com/experience. Offered by Meredith Corporation.



TINA TCHEN

POLITICAL ACTIVIST, PRIORITIZER, PROUD MOTHER / INTERVIEW BY BETSY FISCHER MARTIN

ENGAGE IN YOUR COMMUNITY

"My mother was the consummate volunteer mom—you know, the Brownies, the American Friends Service, the PTA. And I think that just became part of my DNA. When I came to the White House from Chicago, I had to resign from 10 not-for-profit boards."

DON'T BE RULED BY FEAR

"I had a successful law career. There was a moment, late at night, when I was talking with the Obama transition team about the new job, and I thought, 'Am I really about to do this?' Which was to give up the firm I loved, the neighborhood where my kids grew up, a church community. But the opportunity to serve and to use the skills I had acquired helped me overcome the fear."

TREAT PEOPLE KINDLY—THEY WILL POP UP AGAIN

"You would be amazed at the people I knew in a prior life whom I now see. The Vice President's chief of staff and I met as teenagers in Cleveland at a student council event. We did not run into each other again until he walked into the White House. You never know!"

TRUST THAT THINGS WILL WORK OUT

"I was sitting at my kitchen table with my six-year-old son, reading a newspaper story on adoptions from China. He is the only child of divorced parents, and I started to think about him being without a sibling. I remember feeling panicked before we went to get Emma at the orphanage. I thought, 'What am I about to do to my son and myself? You have no idea what this child is going to be like.' But we fit perfectly. In many ways, Emma is more like me than my son is. A lot of people think Patrick is the adopted one."

LET YOUR EXPERIENCE HELP OTHERS

"The team from our **Reach Higher initiative**, which inspires students to complete their education, would probably tell you that I torture them. I say, 'Here's what I am doing for Emma's college-application process. What are we doing to help low-income parents do this?' You try to think about how low-income families can compete with folks who have got all these other resources."

MRS. OBAMA TAUGHT ME...

". . . to focus. The hardest part of my job has been to say no to things that are terrific because we don't have the time and because we'd lose the focus that has allowed us to make an impact. The First Lady is good at keeping us on track."

PRIORITIZE RUTHLESSLY

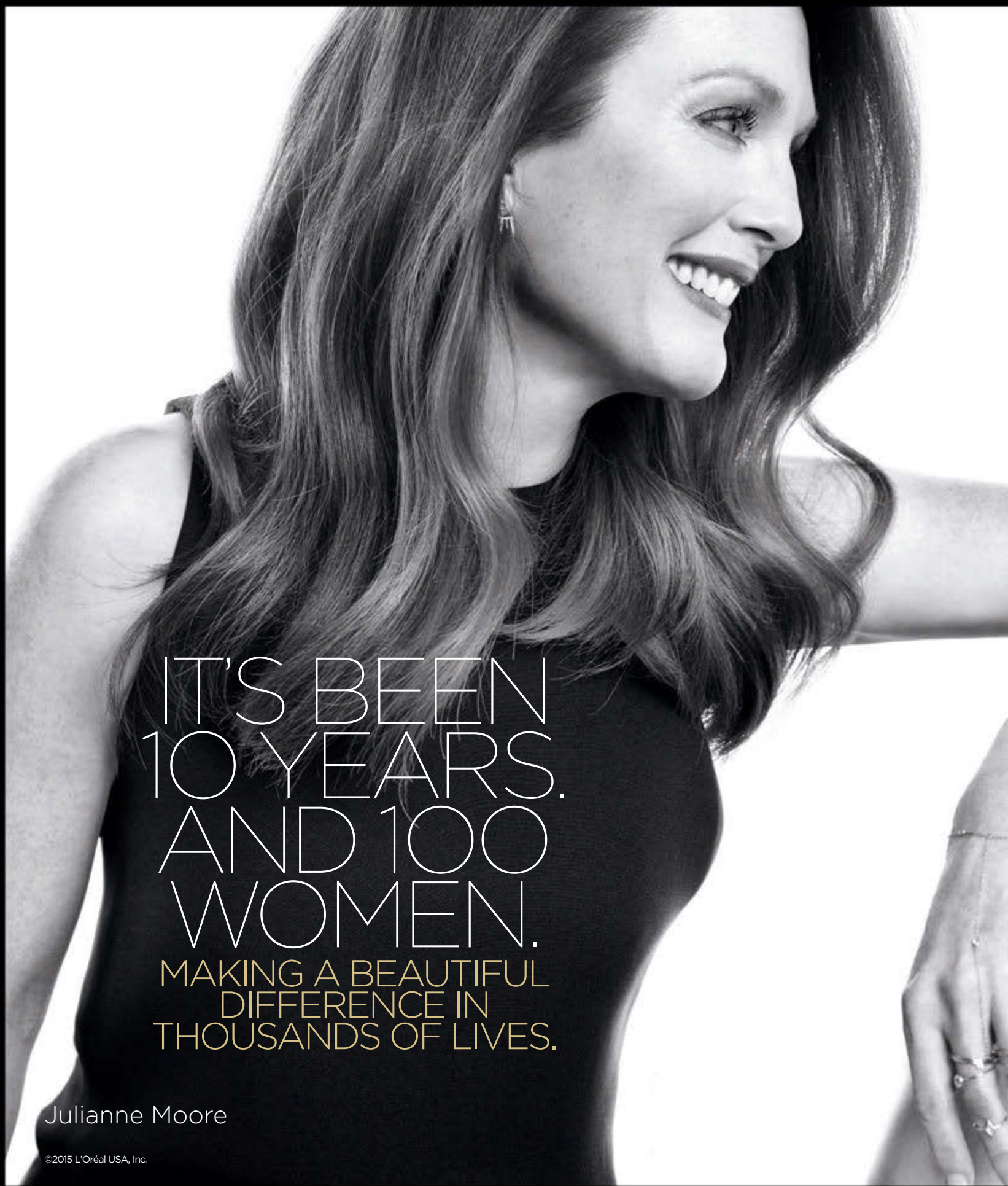
"There are a lot of things I'd do if I weren't single with kids at home. Are they as essential as getting home to help with homework? No."

TINA TCHEN, 59, IS THE ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES AND THE CHIEF OF STAFF TO FIRST LADY MICHELLE OBAMA. SHE ALSO SERVES AS THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR THE WHITE HOUSE COUNCIL ON WOMEN AND GIRLS. TCHEN LIVES IN WASHINGTON, D.C., WITH HER TWO CHILDREN.

This interview has been edited and condensed.

PHOTO REFERENCE: LAWRENCE JACKSON

ILLUSTRATED BY *Michael Hoeweler*



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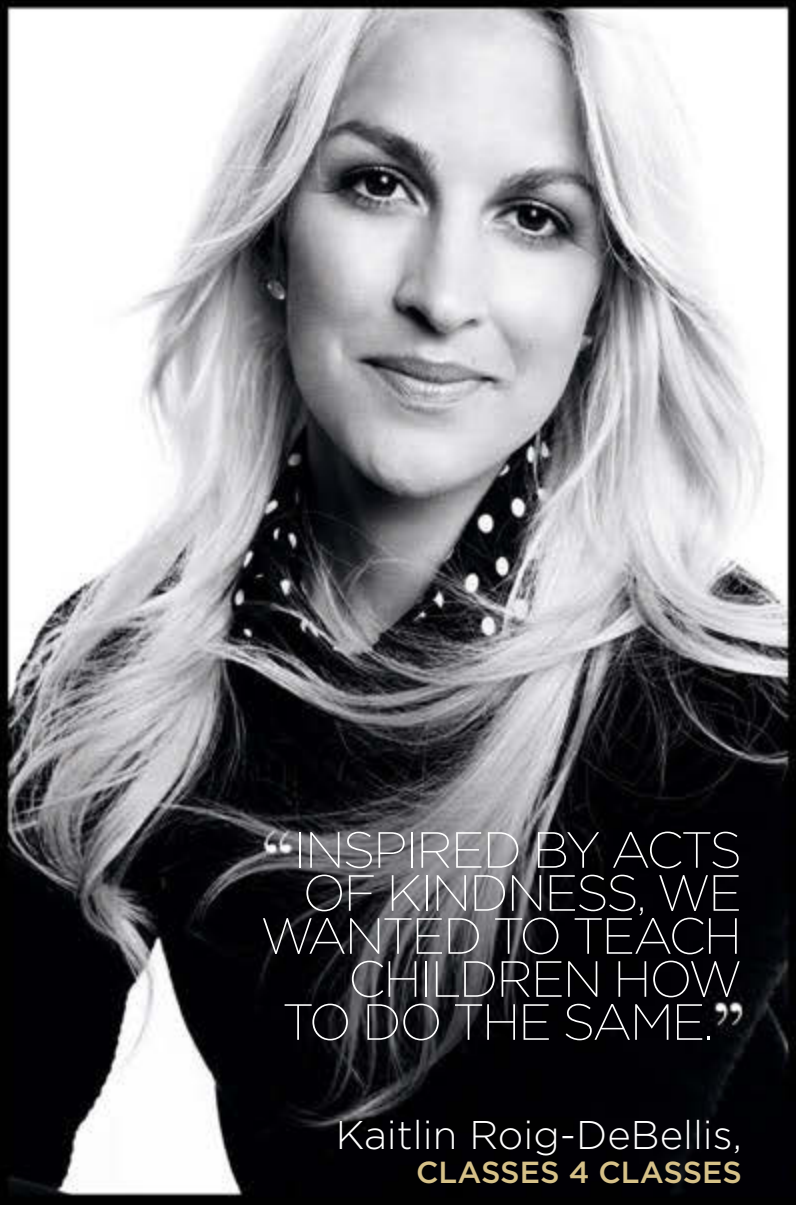

"AFTER MY COUSIN WAS DIAGNOSED WITH BREAST CANCER, IT INSPIRED ME TO HELP STOP THIS DEADLY DISEASE."
Brittany Wenger,
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WOMEN of WORTH



"I MOTIVATE WOMEN EASILY BECAUSE I HAVE BEEN THERE."

Shaaron Funderburk,
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"INSPIRED BY ACTS OF KINDNESS, WE WANTED TO TEACH CHILDREN HOW TO DO THE SAME."

Kaitlin Roig-DeBellis,
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"I MAY NOT HAVE A LOT — BUT I CAN GIVE WHAT I HAVE TO HELP OTHERS."

Rachel R. Jackson-Bramwell,
PROJECT COMPASSION, NFP

Assists homeless and disadvantaged men, women, and children with food, shelter, and job training.



"LOSING MY LEGS WAS A TRAGEDY, BUT IT WAS A CALL TO HELP OTHER PEOPLE."

Stephanie Decker,
THE STEPHANIE DECKER FOUNDATION

Supports children with prosthetics through technology and financial assistance.

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WOMEN of WORTH



Helping girls rule the world

Ambassador **Catherine Russell**'s agenda is all about the *e*'s: education, entrepreneurship and the biggest *e* of all—empowerment **BY CHRISTINA BELLANTONI**

It's been 20 years since Hillary Rodham Clinton stood at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing and told an audience of assembled leaders it was "no longer acceptable to discuss women's rights as separate from human rights." Clinton continued, "If there is one message that echoes forth from this conference, let it be that human rights are women's rights and women's rights are human rights, once and for all."

Catherine Russell, 54, says she still hears that message loud and clear, traveling the world as the U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues. Appointed in 2013, Russell is working to make sure the ideal of women's rights is incorporated at all levels of America's foreign policy. "Since Clinton's speech, we have more girls in school, we have more women participating in political office. Change is possible," says Russell, a former deputy assistant to President Obama and a top Senate Judiciary Committee aide who was instrumental in the passage of the Violence Against Women Act in 1994. "But there's no question that in certain parts of the world, there are still tremendous challenges. We're very mindful that sometimes women have to be taught they have rights. The notion that they can say no to their husbands or stand up for themselves—in some places, that idea is unimaginable."

We talked with Ambassador Russell about the issues women face and what the United States is doing to help.

HAIR AND MAKEUP: CLIVE COLEMAN AT ZENOBIA AGENCY

PHOTOGRAPHED BY *Jeff Brown*

What's the number-one challenge for women around the world?
We have to make it more possible for women to participate economically. When they have economic opportunity, it makes a huge difference. Ninety percent of women's incomes go back into their families. That [helps send] their kids, particularly their girls, to school.

In March the President and First Lady launched Let Girls Learn, which aims to keep girls in school worldwide. What are you doing in that area?
Girls who stay in school are married later and have fewer children. They're less likely to contract HIV/AIDS. They're more likely to have the skills to think critically and understand political arguments. Adolescent girls who stay in secondary school one year longer than they might have can increase their future earnings by 10 to 20 percent. We use this data to make a point about the concrete economic benefits of investing in girls' education.

Of course, we've seen some families in conflict areas who are so concerned about their daughter's safety, they believe if they marry her off [instead of keeping her in school], she's going to be protected from other men who may try to take her. We're also trying to address the issue of violence that women and girls face. Obviously it's difficult for them [to participate in the economy or stay in school] when they're dealing with violence.

These challenges sound enormous, with many layers. How do you tackle them?
The United States is not in a position to solve these problems for other countries. We're looking to support countries in their efforts to create change, and to say, These are the best practices, these are some of the lessons we've learned. One of the ways we have done this is through the Administration's Equal Futures Partnership. This partnership brings together countries to make domestic commitments to breaking down barriers to women's political and economic empowerment. Our Equal Futures commitments have focused on supporting women entrepreneurs and leadership development for women and girls.

You mentioned lessons learned. Can you share some of those?
Last fall I visited Guatemala, where the attorney general gave me a tour of a 24-hour court for people who've experienced gender-based violence. It operates as a one-stop shop for survivors, where women can get medical attention and meet with police officers, lawyers and judges. All the different pieces are integrated. I was so impressed—I now share that concept when I visit other countries dealing with gender-based violence.

You're setting up programs for female entrepreneurs. Are they having an impact?
The first program opened in February in Islamabad, Pakistan, so we'll start seeing results soon. It's funded by my office and supported by the State Department and NGOs, with a goal to provide women with a safe, central location where they can get what they need to overcome the challenges faced by local women entrepreneurs. We've announced three more programs in Africa and two in [Asia's] Lower Mekong Initiative region. There are so many women who want to open their own business but lack basic resources. I met with a woman from Jamaica who runs her own branding company. She told me that many women in her country don't have Internet access. We're asking, How can we help you overcome this barrier?

You've said Nobel Peace Prize winner Malala Yousafzai is an important role model for women. Who else do you admire?
Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf is an important leader. Another is Memory Banda in Malawi. Her family was trying to marry her off at a very young age. She [successfully] resisted and eventually got a group of women together in her community to empower other young girls. Whenever they hear that a family is trying to marry off a girl, they go to the family and try to save her. Child marriage completely truncates a girl's opportunities.

What should we be teaching boys?
That girls are people just like they are and girls should be entitled to every right and opportunity boys are entitled to. We've seen that some of the greatest champions of girls and women can be men. I did a panel with Malala's dad. He described the day she was born and how thrilled he was. Some people said to him, "Oh no, it's a girl . . ." but he embraced the notion of having a daughter and believed she should have every opportunity.

If the U.S. elected a woman President, what do you think the impact would be?
I think we all hope for more women leaders. It's important in terms of what they will do, but it also is a symbol for girls everywhere that they can do absolutely anything, including [lead] their countries. As someone once said to me, "One woman can do anything, but many women can do everything."

HOW YOU CAN HAVE MORE IMPACT

THE LET GIRLS LEARN INITIATIVE

CATHERINE RUSSELL has an ally in Michelle Obama. The First Lady recently launched **Let Girls Learn**, which promotes keeping girls in the classroom. "Sixty-two million girls around the world, half of whom are adolescents, are not in school," says Tina Tchen, the First Lady's chief of staff. "These girls have fewer economic opportunities." **Let Girls Learn**, which works hand in hand with the Peace Corps, has three objectives: training volunteers in countries where the education of girls is lacking; working with local leaders to develop community-based solutions, such as creating technology camps for girls; and training 650 additional Peace Corps volunteers to work on behalf of at-risk girls. While the program's focus is international, Michelle Obama hopes it inspires girls at home, too: "The sacrifices girls worldwide are making to get their education—how they're pushing forward in the face of poverty and violence—I want our young people to be awed by these girls. But more importantly, I want them to be motivated by these girls." (To get involved, visit whitehouse.gov/letgirlslearn.)

CHRISTINA BELLANTONI, a *More* contributing editor, is editor-in-chief of *Roll Call*, a congressional newspaper based in Washington, D.C. ***@cbellantoni***

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EMPOWERMENT THROUGH EMPLOYMENT



While America's military heroes are on the battlefield, their spouses face struggles of their own. Of the 1.3 million military spouse population, a staggering 25% are unemployed. Since 2012, Toyota has partnered with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation on Hiring Our Heroes, an initiative that aims to help veterans, transitioning service members, and military spouses find meaningful employment opportunities.

This partnership has led to the development of a free career resource, **MyCareerSpark.org**, which aims to help spouses overcome the common career roadblocks associated with military life.

HELPING MILITARY SPOUSES TRANSLATE EXPERIENCES

Contrary to popular belief, life in the military can be a great strength for these women and men who exhibit higher than average self-motivation, flexibility, and commitment. For example, military spouses volunteer 3 to 4 times the national average, taking on positions that exceed their education and experience, and excelling at them. However, spouses are not in the habit of thinking about their volunteer experience as a skill that makes them ideal employees.

MyCareerSpark.org helps military spouses translate all their experiences into a skills-based resume that focuses on the skills they've gained through their education, volunteer experience, and work experience. The site also provides information and tips for military spouses on how to prepare and dress for interviews, set employment goals, network and track their progress.

Further, MyCareerSpark.org has an employer search feature where military spouses can add their completed resumes to a searchable database for employers.

The unemployment rate for military spouses is a staggering 25%.

Participating employers can set up a free account, then once vetted (for the security of the job seeker) can search thousands of veteran and military spouse resumes to find qualified candidates for their open positions. Currently, over 6,500 employers have signed up to have access to this amazing pool of talent, including nearly 600 Toyota dealers.

Military spouses develop soft skills that employers look for in potential employees—Critical Thinking, Adaptability, Leadership, and Coping Skills.

RESUME ENGINE

Toyota and Hiring Our Heroes also created **ResumeEngine.org**, a free, online tool that helps veterans and transitioning service members develop resumes that capture the entirety of their military service and puts it in a language that resonates with civilian employers.

TOYOTA | Let's Go Places

HIRING OUR HEROES
U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE FOUNDATION


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When life forces you to reinvent

Two veterans, of different ranks and races, faced the same tough challenge: getting civilian employers to value their military experience. How they dug in and got hired **BY LOUISE FARR**

ROBIN BABB AKIN

FROM: Brigadier general, U.S. Army

↓

TO: Director of strategic marketing in the defense industry

When Robin Babb Akin started to job hunt, a few months before her retirement from the Army at age 53, she had no doubts about her future. And with her résumé, why wouldn't she have been confident? As a young paratrooper, she was one of the first women to be certified as a jumpmaster; overseas, she commanded as many as 25,000 troops, and in 2009, as a member of a small, elite team, she helped mastermind the U.S. combat withdrawal from Iraq. "In 2011, I watched on television as the tanks left Iraq for Kuwait," she says. "I thought, We did it!"

Akin holds three degrees: her BA plus the two master's degrees she earned while in the service. And yet it took her six months to land a civilian job. "We've moved armies around," she says, but in terms of vets seeking employment, "we're still having to prove ourselves. We can't get our dang feet in the door."

Growing up in Nashville, one of five kids whose single mother worked four jobs to support them, Akin dreamed of becoming a lawyer. "I learned to balance a checkbook by the age of 10, and I didn't want to have a family that had to live like that," she says. In college, at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, she began to understand that she'd never be able to afford law school—but an ROTC course she took was so inspiring that she ended up joining the Army in 1982, on the same day she graduated with a political science degree. »

STYLIST: JULIE WHITMIRE; HAIR AND MAKEUP: AL TILDWELL AT KIM DAWSON AGENCY

PHOTOGRAPHED BY *Misty Keasler*



WE ARE #WOMENINSPIRED. WHAT INSPIRES YOU?



"I came to America to earn my doctorate," says Dipti Mehta. "Now I'm helping cure cancer, raising my daughter and working on ways to start a regional milk bank for preemies."

Dipti is inspired to make a difference. See how she and other women are empowering themselves by pursuing their passions, protecting what they love, investing for tomorrow, and much more.

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She rose to the rank of brigadier general. Always remembering her roots, Akin says, "I used to look in the mirror and think, How did you do that? Dadgummit, you're pretty good, girl." But by 2006 she and her husband, Greg, an Army colonel, were beginning to burn out from years of separate deployments balanced with caring for their son and daughter, who by then were 16 and 20. The couple bought land in Fort Worth, Texas, and planned to build a house eventually and begin post-military careers. Her husband left the Army first, in 2011, and spent two years with her in Korea. Then Robin Babb Akin's military life was over. Two years later, she looks back and says ruefully that even compared with the parachute jumps that compressed her spine and left her two inches shorter, "civilian life is much harder."

By 2013 the Akins' land had become devalued by the post-2008 real estate crash, making it a bad idea to build. She and her husband relocated to Fort Worth anyway, moving in with his mother. Akin felt confident she'd land a management position in local or city government—or maybe her fantasy job, with the Dallas Cowboys. But her search for work did not take off. "In the military, everything is face-to-face contact, and promotions happen because your superiors see your capabilities," she says. "Outside you can't get an in without being on the Internet"—something she had little experience with. She lined up some interviews with the help of a mentor, only to be told she was overqualified.

Finances were not an immediate issue; her Army salary had been large enough—$170,000, including benefits—that she'd been able to save, even while frequently helping out family members. And now she had an annual pension of about $90,000. But at 53, Akin felt she still needed to work, for herself as well as for the money—and she still wanted to lead.

Meanwhile, wanting to help her new Texas community, she visited a veterans' workshop offered through the Dallas nonprofit Attitudes & Attire, which assists low-income and unemployed women. Texas has more women veterans—177,075—than any other state. The vets Akin was there to support had been enlisted service members; some were homeless, in ill health or both, needing dental work as well as employment. "Many of them seemed broken," Akin says, "needing a boot up to get back on track. They were soldiers; they were people like me who had lost their nerve to go in through a door and ask for a job." She credits Attitudes & Attire founder Lyn Berman with encouraging her: "She is like my godmother. She said, 'Robin, you can do this.'"

Strategizing like the general she had so recently been, Akin took command and analyzed her situation. "I decided to pursue the defense arena, because they'd understand more of what I'd done in the Army," she says.

She also made the Internet work for her. In a bold move, she approached the CEO of Elbit Systems of America via LinkedIn, conveying that she was interested in the company. Given that Elbit develops and manufactures high-performance aerospace and defense electronics and electro-optic systems—a technical field that was not Akin's specialty—she figures that simply sending her résumé "probably never would have got me in the door." Almost immediately the CEO invited her to interview.

She'd won a big chance, but she was afraid. Despite her nearly 32 years in the military and three degrees, her failure in the job market had left her uncharacteristically insecure.

"When you're a soldier, you go into a room and you look and feel your part," she says. But she couldn't wear any of her multiple medals to a job interview. "As a civilian, I didn't know what my part was. Did I have the right shoes on? Was my hair too long? I left the interview thinking I had not proven myself."

But she had. Elbit offered her a consulting position, then, after five months, hired her permanently as director of strategic marketing. Akin told *More* what she was earning in the new job, but later asked to withdraw the number because Elbit does not disclose salary information. She attributes her error to her own naïveté. Because the military pay scale is prescribed and known to all, she didn't realize that salary is often kept confidential.

She feels she has an excellent position, but she still dreams of what she might do in the future—maybe teach at a university or work with vets through a nonprofit. "I still need to lead," she says. "And I would prefer to do something that will pay bigger dividends than my paycheck."

To that end, she's working on an Elbit program that will save lives by enhancing border security with a partner nation of the U.S. "It's like moving mountains again," she says. "I've got to just keep moving mountains." »

WHY THE TRANSITION IS SO TOUGH

1. "I didn't know the rule books and the responsibilities that came with being a civilian. I'm still just learning that."
2. "It's still a man's world. And in Texas, it's a big-hat man's world."
3. "In the military, we are 1 percent of 1 percent, and employers are going to recognize that one day and show us off."

HER TWO FAVORITE ITEMS IN HER CLOSET ARE...

"My Airborne wings and my beret. Those two things still fit."


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COMFORT
IS IN
FULL
BLOOM
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AVA VENISHEL

FROM: Petty officer first class in the U.S. Navy

↓

TO: Supervisor in the compliance department of a national payroll company

For Ava Venishel, looking for a job when she left the Navy was so frustrating that she wept as she told her parents about it. "Don't worry," they said. "We can always turn our basement into an apartment." At which point, all three of them started laughing. Her parents knew that becoming dependent on them was her worst fear, says Venishel. "So they were joking about it in order to keep me from cracking."

A single mother, she had left her last post, in Mississippi, and driven with her son, Ajaye, then seven, to her parents' home in Rochester, New York. It was August 2013, and she expected her stay to be brief, ending when she found her first post-Navy job. As a petty officer with 20 years of service, she had amassed about 100 days of time off with pay, which she assumed would give her plenty of time to find a position she loved.

Venishel had joined the Navy a year after high school, excited about a career that would involve travel. Her work—she was an oceanographer and a submarine-warfare specialist who instructed other sailors about underwater sound—often took her abroad. She rode white-water rapids in Austria, climbed the steps to the top of the Eiffel Tower and toured the Colosseum. But once she had her son, she knew she would have to give up her adventurous life. And knowing that her military field was so specialized that it wouldn't translate well to the civilian market, she began to prepare.

"I needed a Plan B," says Venishel, who had already earned an online bachelor's degree in natural science and mathematics. Now she used "all the downtime at sea" to get a master's in management and human resources. "I wanted a job that was a career. I figured with my education I wouldn't have a problem," she says.

The day after she arrived in Rochester, Venishel began submitting résumés online for administrative and instructor positions. Salary immediately became an issue. In the military, food and housing allowances had bumped her total annual compensation to about $67,000. "The first month, you think, I'm going to hold out for the same money I was getting in the Navy," Venishel says. By month two, after hearing "Thanks but no thanks" in response to her applications—or hearing nothing at all—she realized she might have to settle for less.

"I knew if I could get in the room, I would be OK," she says. "The problem was, I wasn't getting the interviews."

Still, Venishel wasn't too worried. She figured that even if she didn't find her life's passion, her extensive Navy teaching and administration experience would be enough to land her a job in the training department at Rochester Gas and Electric, the utility company where many of her family members and friends worked. "The people I know will make sure I'm taken care of," she remembers thinking. But even a friend of her father's who was an RG&E supervisor—and a Navy veteran himself—couldn't help her. She lacked the technical knowledge and field experience RG&E required of trainers, he told her, so she would have to work her way up. It was as if all her Navy expertise counted for nothing.

"I started telling my mom, 'Now I'm nervous,'" says Venishel, who, like many veterans, already suffered from anxiety and ground her teeth at night.

Finally, a friend suggested she investigate Paychex Inc., a national payroll company that in 2013 had begun actively wooing vets. "I'm an oceanographer. How am I going to help a payroll company?" Venishel said. Still, in mid-September, she visited the Paychex booth at Rochester's crowded National Veterans Job Expo, and a recruiter advised her that applying online for multiple positions would increase the odds of someone at Paychex reading her

STYLIST: SHEA HURLEY AT PLUTINO GROUP; HAIR AND MAKEUP: CHRISTINE JAIRAMSINGH

PHOTOGRAPHED BY *Angela Lewis*

HOW YOU CAN HAVE
MORE IMPACT

INSPIRED BY THE JOINING FORCES INITIATIVE

Joining Forces was launched in April 2011 by First Lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden with the goal of improving the pathways to education, employment and wellness for veterans as they make the thorny transition from military to civilian life. "When we meet veterans, many of us have learned to say, 'Thank you for your service,'" says Colonel Steve Parker, executive director of **Joining Forces**. But that's where the conversation often stops. "There's a pause, and then there's a moment of indecision and discomfort where folks aren't sure what to say or do next."

Want to help? Here, some ideas from *More* researchers.

CONSIDER WORKING WITH ONE OF THESE REPUTABLE ORGANIZATIONS:

ACADEMY WOMEN, San Jose, California: The nonprofit's eMentor Program teams volunteer mentors with women who are transitioning out of the military, providing them with Web-based career guidance, inspiration and support. What you can do: Be a mentor. ementorprogram.org

ATTITUDES & ATTIRE, Dallas: The Boots to Heels program helps women veterans, many of them homeless, through workshops that focus on grooming and job-interview preparation. What you can do: Donate interview-suitable clothing or serve as a personal shopper. attitudesandattire.org

BOB WOODRUFF FOUNDATION, New York: Cofounded by ABC News correspondent Bob Woodruff and his author wife, Lee, after his recovery from a near-fatal bomb attack in Iraq, the foundation assists many organizations that help injured post-9/11 veterans with education, employment, rehabilitation and recovery. What you can do: Buy tickets to the foundation's Stand Up for Heroes concert at the Theater at Madison Square Garden on November 10. bobwoodrufffoundation.org/sufh

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY, worldwide: Veterans are building affordable housing for themselves and other vets through Habitat for Humanity's Veterans Build program. What you can do: Pick up your toolbox and join them; find your local Habitat branch online. habitat.org

HOPE FOR THE WARRIORS: With offices in Virginia, New York, North Carolina and Texas, this nonprofit provides career transitioning through seminars, workshops and mentoring. What you can do: Volunteer to host a fund raiser. See if your company will agree to be a corporate sponsor. hopeforthewarriors.org

OPERATION REINVENT: This New York City–based organization, launched in 2014, offers a free yearlong program, as well as one-day on-base workshops, to prepare military women to transition into civilian life and secure meaningful jobs. At workshops in San Diego and Fort Bragg, North Carolina, attendees receive new clothes and a makeover and are assigned mentors to prep them for specific job interviews. What you can do: Donate ($25 and up). operationreinvent.org

If you are a business owner or hiring manager, add veterans to your payroll. Parker says more than 700,000 new jobs for vets and their spouses can be directly attributed to **Joining Forces**. For more information on how to hire vets, go to "How You Can Have More Impact" on page 42.

résumé. "And be sure to include your leadership and strategic-thinking skills," he added.

Through the same job fair, she scored an October interview with another major corporation, which assured her the pay would be comparable to her Navy earnings. "It was like a little ray of light," says Venishel. The corporation did make an offer: a compliance-department job at $12 an hour, which was a nearly 65 percent cut from her Navy pay. "I almost had a heart attack," Venishel says. When she politely refused the offer, the recruiter upped it to $13, saying, "Wouldn't that be better than nothing?"

The comment panicked Venishel. Her last official military check was to arrive around the end of November, and the subsequent $1,400 monthly retirement benefits would not cover her expenses.

But she'd also applied for a call-center IT job at Paychex, giving her résumé to a friend of a friend inside the company who'd promised to hand it to the right person. She would have to work evening hours, which wouldn't be good for Ajaye. And the pay wasn't terrific. But it would be a way in. "With the skills that I have, I'll move out of this role fast," Venishel promised herself.

She interviewed for the IT job, but afterward Paychex offered her a supervisor's position in the compliance department instead, at a salary in the midsixties. She started work in December 2013.

Last spring Venishel bought a house and began remodeling—work she's well qualified to do, having volunteered, in her Navy years, to build housing in Malaysia and Thailand and to participate in a tsunami support group that helped rebuild in Sri Lanka. "Ajaye is helping me tear down drywall," she says. "We're having a blast."

She loves her job and was asked to join a Paychex team that gathers periodically to strategize about attracting military applicants. Last fall Venishel returned to the National Veterans Job Expo, this time as a recruiter in the Paychex booth. "I got to tell everybody how awesome Paychex is and to not freak out as a veteran," she says. "I tell them, 'Don't panic. Let me help you write a better résumé, because there is a position for you out there.'"

LOUISE FARR, the author of *The Sunset Murders* and a former West Coast editor of *W*, writes frequently about the arts, veterans, and crime. ***@lfarrwriter***

Winning the fight for a fitter America

PUMP UP THE LAUGHTER

In the five years since she launched ***LET'S MOVE!***, an initiative aimed at reducing childhood obesity, the First Lady has slam-dunked with the Miami Heat, Hula-Hooped with Jimmy Fallon, held GIF-worthy press conferences with Muppets and danced the Dougie with D.C. schoolchildren. And she's employed some gentle arm twisting—with those impressively toned biceps!—to bring CEOs and other top influencers on board.

↓

MOVING THE NEEDLE

CHILDHOOD OBESITY remains a challenge, but after a half decade of awareness raising via viral video, plus a solid campaign around which existing health trends could coalesce, ***there are signs that children—and adults—are getting the message.***

*

After climbing for decades, obesity rates among low-income preschoolers leveled off in 2013 and began to decline in 18 states and the Virgin Islands. And Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data from a small but encouraging sample showed a

43%
DROP

(from nearly 14 percent in 2004 to just over 8 percent in 2011–12) IN THE OBESITY RATE OF CHILDREN AGES TWO TO FIVE.

*

THE HEALTHY, HUNGER-FREE KIDS ACT OF 2010 changed the food served in school cafeterias for the first time in 30 years, and more than 90 percent of school districts are successfully meeting the new standards. Kids are now eating up to 16 percent more vegetables and 23 percent more fruit at lunch, and more than two million children have a ***LET'S MOVE!*** salad bar in their school.



UP AND AT 'EM!

In 2012 some

20
MILLION AMERICANS

practiced yoga, up from 16 million in 2008.

1 in 10 adults now owns a

PERSONAL-FITNESS TRACKER.

Nearly nine million kids are getting

60
MINUTES

of physical activity a day thanks to ***LET'S MOVE!*** **ACTIVE SCHOOLS**.

The U.S. Tennis Association has pledged to build at least

5,000 NEW KID-SIZE COURTS

and train at least 15,000 NEW COACHES, TEACHERS AND VOLUNTEERS.

GETTING FRESH

SALES OF FRESH PRODUCE INCREASED from 2007 to 2012. Spending on berries, other fruit and tree nuts rose from **$19 BILLION** to **$26 BILLION.**

*

Farm-to-school programs now exist in more than 40,000 SCHOOLS, SERVING 23.5 MILLION STUDENTS IN ALL 50 STATES.

*

The Department of Defense **HAS UPGRADED**—for the first time in 20 years—**THE NUTRITIONAL STANDARDS** for the ***$4.65 billion worth*** of food it buys for service members and their families each year.

*

1.6
MILLION KIDS

now attend healthier day-care centers, where ***fruits and vegetables*** have replaced cookies and juice.

*

The USDA has rolled out CHOOSEMYPLATE.GOV, which includes recipes, trackers and a MyPlate icon to HELP AMERICANS MAKE BETTER FOOD CHOICES AT MEALTIMES.

*

Chains such as **SUBWAY** have created HEALTHIER KIDS' MENUS.

↓

THE FITNESS EFFECT

There is now a ***LET'S MOVE!*** city in every state, meaning 70 million Americans live in a region that encourages walking (instead of driving), active play (instead of TV watching) and healthier food choices for all, whether at snack time in preschool, lunch period in high school or a coffee break at city hall.

Reported by **ANGELA WOODALL.** ***@angelawoodall***

SOURCES: *LET'S MOVE!*; PARTNERSHIP FOR A HEALTHIER AMERICA; THE ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON FOUNDATION; NPD GROUP; *YOGA JOURNAL*/SPORT MARKETING SURVEYS USA; HEALTHY WEIGHT COMMITMENT FOUNDATION; U.S. CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE; U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

ILLUSTRATED BY *Joon Mo Kang*







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THE HOT FIVE

↓

Books to make the season sizzle.
More staffers' top picks

The Diver's Clothes Lie Empty

BY VENDELA VIDA *Ecco* This whip-smart caper is written in the second person, which perfectly suits its theme of blurred identity. An American woman, "you," has her passport and wallet stolen while on a solo vacation in Casablanca. When the police chief offers her another woman's passport, she's desperate enough to take it "temporarily"—and life becomes exquisitely complicated. A page turner with philosophical chops. —**DAWN RAFFEL**

The Last Love Song

BY TRACY DAUGHERTY *St. Martin's* It might be easier to capture a unicorn than to pin down the almost-mythological Joan Didion, whose intricate prose and enigmatic persona have long bewitched her admirers. Daugherty, brave soul, has written a big, unauthorized biography that explores the life, work and influence of this brilliant writer and social critic whose character is as contradictory as America itself. —**CATHLEEN MEDWICK**

Spectacle: The Astonishing Life of Ota Benga

BY PAMELA NEWKIRK *Amistad* In 1906 a young Congolese "pygmy" was exhibited in the Monkey House at the Bronx Zoo. Thousands came to gawk at him, as anthropologists offered "proof" that he was less than human. In this enthralling social history, Newkirk reveals the truth about Ota Benga, the people who exploited him and the heroes who fought vainly to save him. —**MARCIA MENTER**

The Hand That Feeds You

BY A.J. RICH *Scribner* Know your predator: That's the challenge of this mesmerizing murder mystery (did the dogs do it? Or some wilier beast?), a tale of passion, deception and distrust. Behind the pseudonym are Amy Hempel and Jill Ciment, masters of literary fiction collaborating for the first time—but, please, not the last. —**C.M.**

God and Jetfire: Confessions of a Birth Mother

BY AMY SEEK *Farrar, Straus and Giroux* The voice of a birth mother who gave up her child in an open adoption—then pursued a relationship with that child—is one that is seldom heard. And what a voice! In this moving memoir, Seek writes with an iron-hot intensity that spares no one, least of all herself, as she struggles to grasp what motherhood really means. An excursion into a woman's relentlessly loving heart. —**C.M.**

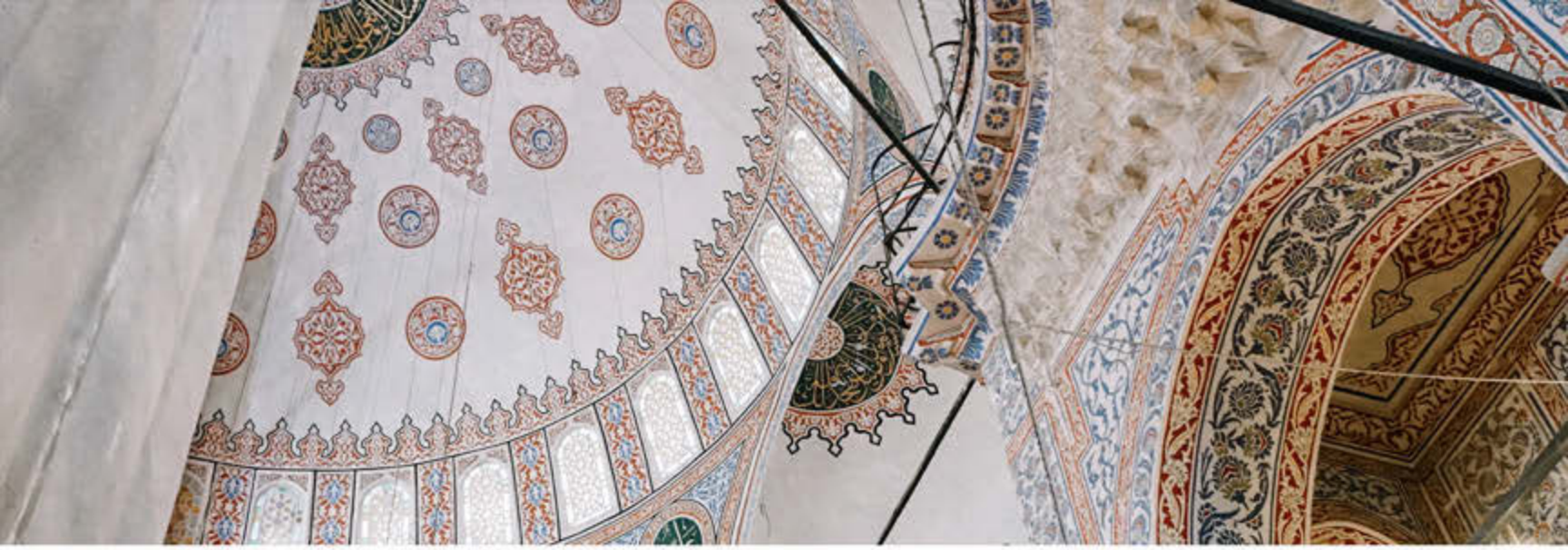


A WRITER I LOVE

* * *

ELIZABETH ALEXANDER'S *The Light of the World* (Grand Central) simply took my breath away. In this powerful, beautifully written memoir, she shares the tragic story of her husband's sudden death, the challenges of raising her boys in the midst of gripping sorrow and the solace she gained along the road to healing. This book is not just an achievement for Elizabeth; it is also a lifeline for others struggling with their own losses—it's Elizabeth's way of telling us, You are not alone. You will eventually find your way out to the other side, and the love you felt for the one you lost will ultimately be your salvation. I am so grateful that Elizabeth had the strength, courage and generosity to pick up her pen and share her hard-earned wisdom and love. —**MICHELLE OBAMA**

PHOTOS: PETER ARDITO



#haveKINDLEwillTRAVEL

@ANASBARROS, ISTANBUL | Amazon asked me to take the Kindle Paperwhite with me on my next trip. I found my way up to the rooftops to read *Kafka on the Shore*. It's a book I keep coming back to because, like this beautiful city, it means something new to me each time I visit.

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I FEEL BAD ABOUT MY BRAIN

Aid and comfort for anyone worried about losing her… you know, that thing she thinks with

Maybe you'd eat blueberries to help keep your mind razor sharp—but would you let a gizmo shoot a tiny electric current into your temples? In the hortatory and hilarious *Let's Be Less Stupid* (Twelve), Patricia Marx tries a battery of strategies (everything from Lumosity to learning Cherokee) in an attempt to "turbocharge" her aging brain. Here's the latest intelligence.

Q: WHEN DID YOU DECIDE YOUR BRAIN NEEDED HELP?
PM: Every time I have a memory lapse, I worry: Does this mean that I will have to have a companion escorting me to the store? Does this mean I will put toothpaste on my contact lenses? Also, we're living longer now and trying to seem younger, so it's hard to accept that we're not thinking at the same speed we once did. It's a topic that preoccupies me and everyone I know, and I wanted to know more about it.

Q: DO YOU THINK BRIGHTER PEOPLE WORRY MORE THAN OTHERS ABOUT BECOMING LESS BRIGHT?
PM: Perhaps, in the same way that there are some people who don't have to worry about losing their looks.

Q: YOU TRIED ALL SORTS OF BRAIN BOOSTERS. WAS THERE ANYTHING YOU'D SWEAR BY?
PM: One thing that was both disconcerting and reassuring to find out: They really don't know very much. For every theory, there is the opposite theory. I mean, even IQ: You get people telling you they're going to raise it and others saying your IQ is your IQ. The only consensus is that social engagement is important and physical exercise is important. And there was a third thing, which I forget.

Q: DIET? ANTIOXIDANTS?
PM: A lot of what they believe is healthy for your brain is healthy for everything else, so why not? —AMANDA LOVELL

THE TAKEAWAYS

GREAT READS FOR B&B, BOAT AND BEYOND

Two young sisters—one devout and undeniably pregnant, the other full of the devil—left by their God-fearing parents in a remote farmhouse… what could possibly go wrong? Val Brelinski's fiction debut, ***THE GIRL WHO SLEPT WITH GOD*** **(VIKING)**, answers that question and others with daring and grace. /// Motherhood without guilt? No such thing. A rotten mama tries to make good in Vanessa Diffenbaugh's novel ***WE NEVER ASKED FOR WINGS*** **(BALLANTINE)**. /// Daddy's girl learns she's Daddy's patsy after he swipes her identity—and sticks her with a load of credit card debt, in Christina McDowell's memoir, ***AFTER PERFECT*** **(GALLERY BOOKS)**. /// Janis Cooke Newman's 1940s novel, ***A MASTER PLAN FOR RESCUE*** **(RIVERHEAD)**, tells of a boy and a man who come face to face with horror and learn what matters more than survival itself. /// Talk about explosive sex! Lara Feigel explores the erotic impact of war on Graham Greene and other writers in ***THE LOVE-CHARM OF BOMBS*** **(BLOOMSBURY)**. /// What if your private island were, like the setting of Peter Nichols's ***THE ROCKS*** **(RIVERHEAD)**, a Mediterranean Eden full of heartbreak and rue? You'd go there anyway—for the ocean breezes and the romance. What else is summer for? —C.M.

HOW YOU CAN HAVE MORE IMPACT

When a child learns to read, the chances that she'll drop out of school or depend on welfare decrease drastically. Here's how you can pass your love of books to the next generation: **HOST A FUND RAISER** Room to Read aims to increase literacy rates among children in developing countries. Its 21 U.S.-based chapters raise money in support; find a chapter at roomtoread.org. **HOLD A BOOK DRIVE** First Book provides new books to children in need. You can help by holding a virtual book drive. For instructions, visit firstbook.org and click on "Get involved." **DONATE BOOKS** Books for Kids (booksforkids.org) builds libraries in low-income areas. Learn how you can stock its shelves at booksforkids.org/get-involved/book-donations. —LAYNIE ROSE

PHOTO: PETER ARDITO

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Zee Alexis from CC Resorts takes an innovative approach to the next generation of footwear incorporating hand-woven 8-way memory stretch elastics and SoleFlex™ technology. These shoes move & respond with your every step.

Left: ***Tina*** *$145 Right:* ***Trina*** *$108 To find a retailer near you, visit* ***ZeeAlexis.com***

ZEE alexis



How the presidency made me a better father

Rule No. 1 in the busy-husband playbook: Find a way to be more present at home. America's busiest spouse reveals what he's learned about balancing family and career **BY BARACK OBAMA**

When you're the President of the United States, you're surrounded at all times—by aides, by press, by Secret Service, by crowds. It's a bubble that's hard to escape.

That's what makes the people with whom you surround yourself in those rare private moments all the more important.

It just so happens that I'm fortunate enough to be surrounded by women. They're the most important people in my life. They're the people who've shaped me the most. And in this job, they are my sanctuary.

People often ask me whether being President has made it more difficult to spend time with Michelle and our girls. But the surprising truth is that being in the White House has made our family life more "normal" than it's ever been.

When Malia was born, Michelle and I were fortunate enough to spend a blissful three months mostly at home with our baby girl. But then Michelle went back to work part time, and I returned to my schedule of teaching at the University of Chicago law school and serving in the state legislature. This meant that I would often be away in Springfield for three days at a time. Even when I was home in Chicago, I had papers to grade and briefs to write and evening meetings to attend.

As professionals, we were blessed with the resources for things like reliable child care and takeout when we were too exhausted to cook. Our jobs afforded us the kind of flexibility that many working families simply don't have. Still, we each had a truckload of student debt, which meant that when we got married, we got poorer together. So we were counting every penny to manage our household bills, pay our student loans and maintain a full-time babysitter. The combined pressures sometimes put a real strain on our marriage, as they do for many working parents with young kids. After Sasha was born, Michelle was working while juggling our home life. I helped out, and





FIRST FATHER (above, from left): A growing family, Barack and Michelle Obama and their daughters, Malia (left) and Sasha. In a temporary office, the newly sworn-in U.S. Senator enjoys a lunch-break visit from the girls. Father-daughter time at home in Hyde Park, Illinois, as the Senator does the breakfast dishes. Opposite: The President says good-bye in the Diplomatic Reception Room of the White House before leaving on an official trip to Arizona.

I saw myself as a pretty enlightened guy. But the truth was, I helped on my terms and on my schedule, and the expectations and the burden disproportionately—and unfairly—fell on Michelle, as happens to many women.

Fortunately, we had the help of my wonderful mother-in-law, Marian, who lived just a few minutes away. Still, Michelle was understandably stressed and frustrated, and I suspect she felt a little like a single mom sometimes. Things didn't get any easier when I was elected to the Senate and had to commute back and forth to Washington every week. Then our lives were thrown completely out of balance during a presidential campaign that kept me on the road almost constantly—leaving Michelle to carry an even heavier load for longer stretches of time.

That's why I call her the rock of our family—because she is. She always has been.

Still, we didn't know what to expect when I became President. We knew I might have even less time for our family. We knew that uprooting Malia and Sasha from their friends and school and community in Chicago would be challenging. So for good measure, we brought Marian with us to ease the transition and to be with them when Michelle and I couldn't.

But to our surprise, moving to the White House was really the first time since the girls were born that we've been able to gather as a family almost every night. Michelle and I can go to parent-teacher conferences together. I've been able to make Malia's tennis matches and Sasha's dance recitals. Sasha let me help coach her basketball team—the Vipers. They won the title. I've even experienced what all dads dread: watching my daughter go to her first prom. In high heels.

So it's not always easy being a father of teenage girls. But it is pretty good to live above the store.

Even with our jam-packed days, Michelle and I work hard to carve out certain blocks of family time that are sacrosanct. For example, at 6:30 PM, no matter how busy I am, I leave work to go upstairs and have dinner with my family. That's inviolable. My staff knows that it pretty much takes a national emergency to keep me away from that dinner table. As a night owl, I'd rather stay up late reading briefings and working on speeches after everybody has gone to bed anyway.

So for an hour or so at dinner, my focus is not on my day, but on theirs. I ask Sasha and Malia the usual annoying parental questions: How was school? What are your friends up to? Have you done your homework? What are you thinking about? In return, they spend a lot of time teasing me about my big ears or stodgy suits—and Michelle is always happy to join them.

Now they're at an age when they're well informed, so they often ask me questions about issues. Like a lot of young people, for instance, they're deeply interested in the environment. Like most in their generation, they take it for granted that people shouldn't be treated differently because of their gender or race or sexual orientation or disability. They have every expectation that they and young women just like them can grow up to be anything they want to be. The highlight of my day is just listening to their thoughts about the world and seeing what smart, funny, kind young women they've become. That hour recharges me and gives me perspective. And those moments where I can just be Dad—even if it's "Daaaaaaad"—well, there's nothing better.

Michelle does her best to preserve that time, and it has made a huge difference. Like I said, she's our rock. Whatever comes up, I know that they'll be there for me. And I will always be there for them. These days, the girls occasionally miss a night because they're so busy with school and activities. And like many parents of high school juniors who are excitedly touring college campuses, I'm already dreading that empty seat at the table when Malia goes off to school next fall. I can feel myself lingering at the table a little longer, trying to stave off the passage of time. But for as long as possible, I'm going to enjoy every minute of finally having us all together under one roof.

First Lady Nancy Reagan once wrote, "Nothing can prepare you for living in the White House." She was right, of course. Nothing can prepare you. But your family can sustain you.

@POTUS (Twitter), ***@whitehouse*** (Instagram)

PHOTOS, OPPOSITE: OFFICIAL WHITE HOUSE PHOTO BY SAMANTHA APPLETON; THIS PAGE, FROM LEFT: COURTESY @MICHELLEOBAMA/INSTAGRAM. *CHICAGO TRIBUNE* PHOTO BY PETE SOUZA; CALLIE SHELL/AURORA PHOTOS



A collage-and-ink work by pioneering conceptual artist Lorna Simpson, who is known for challenging received ideas about gender and identity.

RIUNITE & ICE #15, 2015, © 2015 BY LORNA SIMPSON. COURTESY OF LORNA SIMPSON AND SALON 94, NEW YORK

The feminine mistake

Be graceful. Be elegant. Be modest. Never make waves. How one girl learned the rules for happiness—and how to break them **BY CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE**

ARTWORK BY *Lorna Simpson*

I first knew there was such a thing as blue mascara because of Aunty Chinwe. She came to visit my mother one Saturday, her braids held sleekly at her neck, her caftan's silver embroidery gleaming and her lashes the bright color of a crayon. Against her dark skin, they were striking.

"Aunty, your lashes are blue!" I said.

I was 11.

"Yes, my dear. It's blue mascara," she told me with a smile. She was always smiling, eyes crinkled, teeth very white.

I liked most of my mother's friends—funny women, kind women, brilliant women, and there was the one soft-spoken man—but only to Aunty Chinwe would I say something like that. *Aunty, your lashes are blue!*

She had an air of endless tolerance, of magnanimous grace; she turned every room she entered into a soft space free of the thorny possibility of consequences. With children, her manner was that of an adult just about to hand out lavishly wrapped gifts, not for a birthday or Christmas but simply because children deserved gifts.

I sneaked into the parlor whenever she visited, and sat in a corner, and eavesdropped on her conversations with my mother. Because she drank Fanta elegantly from a glass, I eschewed bottles and began to drink my Coke from a glass. I loved simply to look at her: petite, graciously fleshy, with a dark-dark complexion that made people think she was from Ghana or Gambia or somewhere not Nigeria where beautiful women had indigo skin. At her clinic she gave injections with the gentlest touch. Whenever I was sick with malaria, my parents would make the hour-long drive to Enugu, where she lived, because they knew that only Aunty Chinwe holding the needle would keep me still enough to get my medicine.

When I was 13, my parents briefly considered transferring me to another school, one that was even more rigorous than my already rigorous school. The entrance exam could only be taken in Enugu—the university town where we lived, Nsukka, being too small to be a regional examination center—and so my mother took me to stay with Aunty Chinwe, in her large house with the grand staircase and spacious rooms.

Her three children, younger than I, ran around playing with toys that moved and buzzed at the touch of buttons. Her mother-in-law was a fixture on the veranda, where she issued orders to Aunty Chinwe and the househelps. Her husband, Uncle Emeka, a handsome, gregarious man who liked to tell jokes, played loud funk on his stereo. They might have been any ordinary family, but because of Aunty Chinwe, they seemed to me somehow charmed. My mother's friend Aunty Ngozi once said, "Chinwe is the only woman I know who truly gets along with her in-laws. And her mother-in-law is a witch."

They always had guests. Uncle Emeka would crack joke after joke, poking fun at everyone and at himself. There was a story about how he went to America and did not know how to use a vending machine. Another about somebody farting loudly on a plane and pretending not to know. "Let's have more drinks!" Uncle Emeka said often. He struck me as a man who liked the gratitude of other people.

I spent hours with Aunty Chinwe. I went along when she visited a patient of hers, a diabetic man with a stubborn cut on his foot. As we left his home, I told Aunty Chinwe, "I don't really want to study medicine in university." My teachers and parents expected that I would become a doctor because I did so well in school. I had never told anyone how bored I was by biology, how all I wanted to do was read and write.

Aunty Chinwe was thoughtful and kind. "You don't have to decide now. Wait until you are at least in Class Five. It doesn't have to be medicine, but it must be something that you can feed yourself with."

Her words made me feel lighter. I showed her a short story I was writing, in a lined notebook that was also my study book.

"Make sure you keep all the stories you write," she told me. "One day you will be something."

The evening before I left, one of their guests talked about a man who had lied about his date of birth at a job interview, because the company wanted younger workers, and was now scrambling to get a forged birth certificate as proof.

Uncle Emeka burst out: "Just as Chinwe lied to me and said she was a virgin when we first met!"

He roared with laughter. It was an odd, irrelevant joke. From the visitor came an uncomfortable chuckle. Aunty Chinwe smiled and changed the subject but not before I saw a fleeting clenching of her jaw. She would say nothing, not because she did not want to but because she felt she should not. The visitor looked relieved, grateful to her for saving him further discomfort.

I noticed then how Aunty Chinwe had no sharp angles in her personality. She had blurred them all. She was an ocean of endless nice.

I was 15 and asking many questions of the world. Aunty Chinwe was visiting my mother to tell her about a surprise birthday party for Uncle Emeka. From a bucket-shaped leather bag she withdrew sketches of cakes, sheets of handwritten lists, a small pile of photographs. She gave those to my mother and asked which image of Uncle Emeka would look best on the party souvenirs; she was making ceramic mugs and bottle openers. My mother studied one of the photographs for a while, and I went closer to see. It looked recent, taken at a wedding filled with festive balloons, Aunty Chinwe in a red blouse and wrapper and Uncle Emeka in a red tie and dark suit so tailored it seemed sharp edged. »

"He looks very nice here," my mother said. "They should cut you out and use this one."

Aunty Chinwe looked at the photo. "He did not shave that day," she said.

I'm not sure why I so clearly remember that now, years later. *He did not shave that day.* The way she said it, with intimacy, with pride, as though the photo brought a memory she treasured but would not share. A tone that was about what was hers and hers alone.

"Three hundred guests. This is not a small thing!" my mother said. Her words were layered, dense with unspoken compliments: how dedicated a wife Aunty Chinwe was, how impressive spending her own money on this party, how grand that she had the money in the first place.

Aunty Chinwe deflected my mother's admiration with the ease of a person used to compliments. "Who will I invite and who will I leave out?" she said in Igbo, and in English added, "I have to include everybody."

My parents were senior university workers wrapped in the familiar comforts of the middle class. They had two cars and a house and relatives whose school fees they paid, but neither could plan a party for 300 guests without the other knowing, because they would have to pool resources. I remember my brother asking my parents for a Pac-Man video game when video games were still exotic things, and he tried to make it normal by telling them his classmate owned one. "That's because those people have extra money," my mother said. She meant academics who dabbled in business, like the professor who invented a yam-pounding machine, and another who made wine from cashews. We did not have extra money. Aunty Chinwe had extra money. Her father came from old Igbo wealth, his family had traded in palm oil with the British 100 years ago, and they owned property all over eastern Nigeria. In Enugu, where Aunty Chinwe had grown up, a street was named after her father. Even if she did not work as a general practitioner in her own clinic, she would still have extra money. And in my eyes, it cast a patina of glamour over her life. Her money meant choice, that she could plan a surprise party if and when she wanted to.



NEAR AND DEAR Front row, the author at age eight in Nigeria, 1985, with her immediate family: two sisters, three brothers and, bookending the group, her father and mother.

My mother and I went to Aunty Chinwe's house the day before the party to help with preparations. Caterers were doing the real cooking, so we just sat around in the kitchen making *chin-chin*, me rolling the dough flat, my mother cutting it into careful small squares, Aunty Chinwe frying until the air tasted delicious. She had told Uncle Emeka that the food was for a relative's baby shower the next day.

I was astride a low kitchen stool, the thick flour mix in front of me, when Aunty Chinwe said, "Sit like a woman, my dear."

We always spoke a mix of Igbo and English. This she said in Igbo. *Nwanyi* means both "girl" and "woman."

Her soft voice suggested that I was doing something shameful but that nobody else needed to know of it. When I was little, my mother taught me how to sit properly. "Close your legs" was how my mother said it. Thighs pressed together. Once I asked why and my mother said, "Because you are a girl and girls wear dresses and have to sit with their legs closed so that nothing shows." Maybe my mother could tell that I thought this a lightweight reason, because she added that an ant had once crawled in and stung a girl *down there* because she sat with her legs apart.

I was wearing trousers, and the most comfortable way to sit on that stool was not with my legs pressed together.

"Aunty, I'm wearing trousers," I said.

Aunty Chinwe looked astonished. "Just sit properly, my dear. Always sit properly like a woman."

I realized that it was a ritual that had to be performed, this sitting properly. A ritual about female virtue and female shame. One of the many rituals for which you received mainstream approval if you just performed them and asked no questions. *Sit like a woman* was a small example of bigger rituals. Be quiet and gentle like a woman. Don't be loud, don't be angry, don't be tough, don't be too ambitious.

I did not want to perform them. I wanted to be able to sit in a way I considered most comfortable. Later, it would occur to me that Aunty Chinwe's entire life was about

performing the rituals of femaleness. She had the world's approval, and she wore it like a favorite tasteful dress.

Delicate rosettes had been made from white tissue paper and strung through a bough that framed the doorway. Tables were covered in white cloth. White roses stood in tall vases. The atmosphere was of seamlessness, of sophistication that was not too much.

"*Chinwe di egwu*," my mother said.

The Igbo expression *di egwu* is difficult to translate because of its nuanced, shifting meanings. To be remarkable, unusual, wonderful. My mother used it both for people she admired and for people she found odd.

Aunty Chinwe looked beautiful in a peach dress. "I think Emeka knew about it all along!" she said, smiling. A coral necklace was coiled around her neck. She had the energy of a stage actor on opening night, excited, anxious, eager to convince her audience about the version of herself she would be showing them.

I gave Uncle Emeka the oversize birthday card we had brought, and he hugged me. "You are growing very quickly! Very soon the suitors will start to come. But they must all ask my permission first!"

Before he cut his cake, he made a speech. He called Aunty Chinwe his queen. He said she was perfect and she made many sacrifices for him and she knew exactly what he wanted to eat every day and she gave him business advice and she shopped for all his clothes and she knew where everything he owned was and she had given him three beautiful children and she decided what happened in their house and he was lucky to have it so.

The guests cheered and clapped. From every corner of the room, praise flew. Aunty Chinwe was coated in praise, sunk in praise. She was smiling and glowing.

"Perfect wife," a friend of my mother's said.

It troubled me that Aunty Chinwe's perfection was couched only in terms of what she did for her husband, and not what she was. Not about her intelligence, her humor or how well she gave injections. Later, I would learn that Aunty Chinwe, born Anglican, had converted to Catholicism when she married Uncle Emeka. She transformed herself, became the person he wanted her to be.

Something happened the night of that party. A woman, drunk from many bottles of Guinness stout, began to say things to Aunty Chinwe. About Uncle Emeka. About the two-year-old son he had with a girl from Imo State. Aunty Chinwe was crying softly in the guest room, my mother cradling her. She looked vague, lost. She spoke in very low tones. "I did not shout at him," she told my mother.

Later, I overheard my mother and Aunty Ngozi talking about Aunty Chinwe. She had handled it well, they agreed. It was the best thing to do. Why fight about it and raise more dust?

Aunty Chinwe was an ideal, an idea. My mother and other women I knew might not have been like her, but they idealized her. They not only accepted what she represented, they aspired to it. Aunty Chinwe's experience did not cause me to ask the questions I was asking. But it shaped them. Her life brought my musings to life.

Why did her response have to be tidy to be admired? Why had she not raged at the world in her humiliation, and if she had, why would that not be admirable? It seemed to me more human, more honest. She asked nothing of the man she loved, and this was seen as praiseworthy. To love was to give, but surely to love was also to take. Why did she not take? Why dared she not take? Why did her perfection depend on her not taking?

Shortly after the party, Aunty Chinwe changed her name. From Dr. (Mrs.) Chinwe Nwoye to Dr. (Mrs.) Chinwe Emeka-Nwoye. It was the vogue, in the 1990s, for newly married middle- and upper-class Nigerian women to take a clunky hyphenation of their husband's first and last names. But it was a strange choice for Aunty Chinwe. She was not newly married, and her generation hadn't done that. It was as though her response to her humiliation was to further erase herself, further sink indistinguishably into Uncle Emeka. Or to tell the world that he may have a child with another woman but she was still his wife, and being his wife was what mattered.

My feelings toward Aunty Chinwe then began to curdle. The attributes I had once so admired now irked me. What I thought her ethereal niceness became merely an addiction to the shallow rewards that the world reserved for females who hid certain parts of themselves. Most of all, her experience frightened me, confused me, because she was not easy to explain.

I was 15 and naive, full of the uncompromising certainties of youth. I would come later to admire her again and seek her wisdom at different times in my life. I would come to realize that Aunty Chinwe was not the problem; our society was. It was not about individual women but about the forces in the world that made those women shrink themselves. Aunty Chinwe taught me that wealth did not shield a woman from those forces. Nor did education or beauty. She helped shape my resolve to live my femaleness as the glorious and complex thing that it is. To reject "because you are a woman" as a valid reason for anything. To strive to be my truest, most humane self, but never twist myself into shapes to court the approval of the world.

Aunty Chinwe's experience did not cause me to ask the questions I was asking. But it shaped them. Her life brought my musings to life.

CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE is a novelist and short story writer whose work has been translated into 30 languages. Her most recent novel, *Americanah*, won the 2013 National Book Critics' Circle Award for Fiction. She divides her time between Nigeria and the United States.



ON THE ROAD First Lady Michelle Obama hugs Melissa Winter during a visit to Boulders Beach to see African penguins, in Cape Point, South Africa, June 30, 2013.

The First Lady and me

She was the wife of a first-term Senator who wanted to be President. I was a D.C. veteran who didn't think much of his chances. What happened when I signed up with her anyway **BY MELISSA WINTER, AS TOLD TO AMANDA ROBB**

At the beginning of 2007, there was one thing I absolutely knew: I did not want to work for a political spouse. I'd been an executive assistant on Capitol Hill for nearly 20 years and had grown comfortable being the person behind the principal, as we staffers refer to important people such as members of Congress or the President. So when my friend Alyssa, who was in the office of then Senator Obama, told me over lunch, "On the down-low, I think he's running for President, and his wife will need a chief of staff," I said, "Thank you, but no thank you."

Alyssa, however, was in persuasion mode. The next week she buys us plane tickets to Chicago and books us rooms at the Fairmont. That night she plies me with sushi and in the morning throws me into a cab, and the next thing I know, I'm on the Obamas' porch. Their house is a gorgeous Georgian Revival on the edges of a gentrified area of the South Side and across the street from the synagogue where my father was confirmed in 1950.

Mrs. Obama was wearing pants and a sweater. We talked for two hours, and at one point she said, "If America is ready for my husband, I'm in." That said, she intended to continue working as a hospital executive as much as she could during the campaign, and she needed her weekends off to be a mom, to take her daughters to ballet and soccer and birthday parties.

We were two women of about the same age, and it turned out we had some things in common. Neither of us, I felt, was interested in change for the sake of change. We both had good lives. I'd spent 10 years at my current job, seven years in a congressional office before that. Mrs. Obama lived a stone's throw from the neighborhood she'd grown up in. When her husband was elected to the Illinois State Senate and then the U.S. Senate, she stayed put in Chicago, and he commuted.

By the time Mrs. Obama asked me about my professional experience, I was thinking

OFFICIAL WHITE HOUSE PHOTO BY CHUCK KENNEDY

that it wouldn't be terrible to temporarily move to Chicago. With "chief of staff" on my résumé, I could leave government and expand my portfolio. I could make money! I wouldn't have to disrupt a relationship, because I had broken up with my boyfriend of four years, who was very un-understanding about my commitment to my job. Truthfully, I also thought, I don't have much to lose, because Hillary Clinton is going to kick our butts in six months.

"Do you like children?" Mrs. Obama asked.

"I love children," I answered, even though children are not my thing. I also told her that I love travel, even though I hate to fly. I fibbed because this woman was saying great stuff and I really liked her.

I got the job. Since I was sure the Senator would be out of the running by summer, I didn't bother renting out my D.C. condo. This was a huge financial mistake, which I quickly compounded by enlisting my mother, who used to live in Chicago, to fly out there from her home in San Diego to find me a sublet. To keep her princess safe, she chose a doorman building with underground parking. She also arranged for me to meet the rabbi from the synagogue near the Obamas. I'm sure she'd taken him aside and told him, "Look, find her a man." (He didn't.)

For nearly a year, Mrs. Obama continued working for the University of Chicago Hospitals, and on the weekends she was indeed a full-time mom. Two days a week, we traveled for the campaign. If the girls were off from school, they came with us. Often we took Southwest Airlines. They don't assign seats, so in the terminal we would sit on the floor right by the gate in order to be first in our group and get seats together.

During the earliest days we had no staff, so if Mrs. Obama needed to go to an event with her husband, I sometimes wound up hanging out with Malia and Sasha, who were then eight and five. I had signed up to do everything I could to help Barack Obama get elected, and when necessary that included playing board games and watching *SpongeBob SquarePants* with his kids. I spent time with the girls, and to my profound surprise, I came to adore them. One afternoon we were at a hotel in Florida, and after months on the road, I was dying to sit outside. I stretched out on a lounger, and Sasha bounded straight over and lay down right on top of me, covering every inch of the body I was yearning to drench in sun! Still, it was nice to know my feelings were reciprocated.

That night, spent cross-legged

on the hotel carpet, eating barbecue and laughing, has always been one of my favorite times with Mrs. Obama, because it happened when she was just Michelle and I was just Melissa.

But it was Michelle Obama who was my boss, and from our first meeting I understood that what she wants most of all is a plan. When something is carefully laid out, she is all in, and she will do her homework.

At the end of these trips, we would grab pizza, then get on the plane home. Once, when her husband couldn't make it to a funeral he'd been asked to attend in Memphis, Tennessee, he requested that she take his place. The service lasted an impressive six hours, and after we made it back to the hotel, I went down to the bar and got us each a beer, and we ordered take-out barbecue. The person who brought it up forgot the silverware, but instead of sending him back for it, Mrs. Obama sat down on the floor with me, and we ate barbecue and greens with our fingers. That was our first night of really getting to know each other, and we swapped funny family stories. Me: My mother's sister married my father's sister's son, so my Uncle Michael is also my cousin. She: Malia's most embarrassing dance recital ever was the day her father, home alone with the kids, took a crack at braiding her hair. That night, spent cross-legged on the hotel carpet, eating and laughing, has always been one of my favorite times with Mrs. Obama, because it happened when she was just Michelle and I was just Melissa.

During the Iowa caucuses, we stayed in a Des Moines Hampton Inn. While the voting took place, Senator and Mrs. Obama went out to dinner at the restaurant next door with all their many friends who'd come to Iowa to canvass. The press secretary, Katie McCormick Lelyveld, and I stayed at the hotel, glued to the TV and our phones. We knew the Obama campaign had picked up a lot of momentum. It had been fun watching Mrs. Obama go from speaking in living rooms to an audience of maybe 19 people to filling five high school gyms a day. But would we win? I sure didn't know.

Then our precinct captains started calling with amazing reports. Katie and I ran over to the restaurant and whispered to my boss, "You'd better come back and get ready." In truth, she could be prepared for TV in 15 minutes, but we just wanted her with us.

She was deciding between two dresses when CNN's Wolf Blitzer said it: "Senator Barack Obama will win the Iowa Democratic caucuses." She, Katie and I screamed with unadulterated joy.

The primaries followed—some losses, but enough wins that by August 2008 we were in Denver for the Democratic National Convention, where Senator Obama would formally accept the nomination. Like any normal person, Mrs. Obama, who would address the convention, was nervous about speaking before what promised to be a humongous TV audience (the number turned out to be 22 million). Her way of dealing with that was to practice. Seriously, she practiced that speech so many times, I still know it by heart. But watching her give it was one of the most joyful moments of my life. With this one speech, the world was going to meet the Michelle Obama I had come to respect and love. »

Denver was her chance to let America see who she was as a mom, a wife and a professional. And she did. She said that she was a woman who "loves this country." That, to her, it's a place "where a girl from the South Side of Chicago can go to college and law school and the son of a single mother from Hawaii can go all the way to the White House." Michelle Obama nailed it in that speech, and as I watched her, I cried and cried.

After the November election, while the world absorbed the possible changes heralded by Barack Obama's becoming President, his family dealt with an old-fashioned change. Dad had a new job, and the family had to move.

The first thing on Mrs. Obama's list was looking at D.C. schools. So we did a preliminary trip with just staff, then went back with Malia and Sasha so they could have a say. Laura Bush had been kind enough to invite them over, so after looking at a few schools, we went to the White House, where the Bush girls, Barbara and Jenna, showed Malia and Sasha their new home, including some interesting upstairs halls and fun back stairways.

Myself, I was thrilled to come back to Washington. The whole progression of moving to Chicago and then moving back to D.C. and landing in the White House—that's what I'd moved to our capital for in the first place. Being back was also great because after two years away, I could stop paying a Chicago rent and a D.C. mortgage.

I'd come to care deeply for the First Lady (or FLOTUS, as we now called her, for First Lady of the United States), and I wasn't going anywhere. But what would my new job be?

All the cool kids on the campaign were angling for jobs in the West Wing, working for the President. Not me. At age 40, I knew my strengths, which are administrative and operational. But I no longer wanted to be Mrs. Obama's chief of staff. My goal was to resume having a personal life while holding on to my favorite part of the campaign job, which was doing personal things for her and the girls. I just wanted to stay close to a family I'd become friends with.

It was my great good fortune that Mrs. Obama let me create a position. As deputy chief of staff for FLOTUS, I oversee operations and administration but also take care of the personal stuff—researching summer camps and finding things for the girls to do on trips they take with their parents.



MISSION TO MOSCOW Melissa Winter and Michelle Obama at the Kremlin in 2009, after a lunch with President Obama, then–Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and his wife, Svetlana Medvedev.

Along with other staff, I accompany the Obamas on official travel. Air Force One is quite a change from group three on Southwest Airlines. It has 4,000 feet of floor space; early on we joked that the girls could just spend their spring breaks on the plane.

Our first trip abroad was in April of the President's first year in office, when he attended a G-20 summit in London. It seemed as if we'd just gotten to the White House and suddenly we were at Buckingham Palace. The Queen clearly took a liking to the First Lady, so when we found ourselves back in town a few months later, we were surprised with a birthday invitation for Sasha: a carriage ride through the royal gardens. We were also treated to a tour of the palace. It was a day that made me realize what an awe-inspiring journey lay ahead.

I've paid a price for living my life not only in public service but in service to those in public life. For 25 years, I have put other people's families before my own. I have vacationed only when my boss is on vacation. I've helped with birthdays. I've planned weddings but never my own.

Luckily, I've pleased my mother in other ways. In 2009 the Obamas held the first White House Seder. I gave the chef my mother's recipe for matzo ball soup, and she loved it. The President and the First Lady, along with Sasha and Malia, autographed a menu card, which says "Matzo Ball Soup," and underneath, "Patricia Winter, Mother of Melissa Winter." I got the menu framed and gave it to my mom, making her a Jewish legend among her friends. And she hasn't gotten over it. Recently, she was telling me all the things she had to do to get ready for a trip. One of them was "Go to the vault at the bank."

"Mom, what do you need to go to the bank vault for?" I said.

"The Seder menu!" she said. "I have to put it in the safe-deposit box. I can't just leave it in the apartment while I'm gone."

So my job put Mom's matzo ball soup in the White House (and the word *schmaltz* in the *New York Times*). In the summer, as I thread my way through zillions of school kids touring the White House, trying to get to my office without spilling my container of coffee, I think of how unique this opportunity is. You're not just getting up and going to work and sitting at your desk. You're sitting in a building that appears on every $20 bill. You're sitting in a job, and a life, that really matters.

AMANDA ROBB is a New York–based journalist who contributes frequently to *More*.

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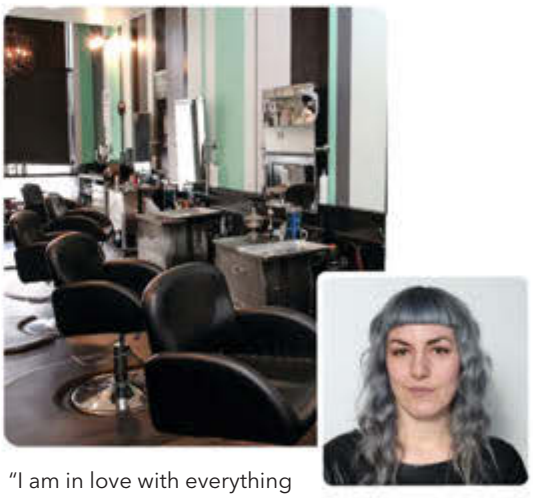
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That's what friends are for

After moving cross-country, a doggedly self-reliant, newly single mother finally learns how to create a circle of support. And all she had to do was ask **BY SUSIE ARNETT**

I was lying awake in bed, panicked that my daughter would wake up sick again. My two kids and I had just moved across the country to a rural part of upstate New York for my new job at a holistic retreat center, and we didn't know anybody in the area. I was starting over after a difficult separation from their father following an eight-year relationship; I needed help, and there was no safety net.

Needing help was not familiar territory for me. When I was a child, my parents and I were a human archipelago, a collection of islands living under the same roof. I was trained to fend for myself, making my own breakfasts and lunches all through elementary school. In my twenties in New York City, my girlfriends and I were a tribe of self-sufficient women connected by happy hours, parties and shopping. Needs were an unattractive fact of life, implying weakness or, worse, incompetence.

There should be another form of the word *I* to signify how different we used to be, because when I look back at my younger self, so unaware of how need will soften and open her, I can't believe she and I are the same person. Although my early training in self-reliance served me well as a TV producer in Manhattan, being a single mother with two small children in a new town was more than even my overdeveloped independence could handle. I couldn't simultaneously stay home with a sick daughter, show up at the office and drive my son to karate after school. And because this was my first job after eight years at home on the mommy track, I wasn't making enough to throw money at the problem. »

ILLUSTRATED BY *Brian Stauffer*

As I lay in bed, worried what my boss would say if I asked to work from home again because of a sick child, I felt more alone than I had in a long time. Not knowing what else to do, I prayed for help.

When I woke up in the morning, my daughter was fine and able to go to school. I was unusually playful with her, energized by relief. As I drove to the office, though, my mind was stuck in a loop. This whole single-mother thing—how was I going to pull it off?

A couple of weeks later, my daughter had her first playdate with a new friend she'd made on the bus. Rose's mother, Maureen, was a stay-at-home mom with three kids. Her background was the complete opposite of mine. I was a city girl and former executive; Maureen was a country girl now raising her children alongside the baby goats in her family room while keeping pigs in a homemade pen in her backyard. She was active in 4-H; I was active on LinkedIn. But fate had thrown us together. And being moms, we found plenty to talk about—our kids' problems, how much homework is too much, the best grocery store.

Sometimes in my new job, I would have to go to the office on weekends. I had one of my first work Saturdays coming up, and it was stressing me out. Paying for child care would throw me into the red. I was at a loss.

I finally screwed up the courage to ask Maureen if my kids could go over for the entire day so I could work. Until then, playdates had lasted a few hours at most. It seemed like so much to ask—but she immediately said yes. I exhaled for what felt like the first time all day.

The following week, Maureen called me one evening. "Sorry for the late notice, but I have to leave for an appointment early in the morning. Can I drop off my kids at 6:30 so they can get on the bus at your house?" I immediately said yes. My kids and I set the alarm for an hour early, and when her children arrived in the morning, we had breakfast together, and then the kids played tag outside while waiting to be picked up.

Pretty soon we were trading what felt like playdates for our kids but were actually lifesavers for Maureen and me. Because her husband worked long hours, she was often on her own and needed help, too.

As our kids became closer, so did we. Her clan became the nearest thing to family that we had in our new life. Although we lived in a small town, Maureen and I called each other "farm friends" because we helped each other out in real ways. Our friendship wasn't based on entertaining each other with coffee or weekend barbecues, although we did that, too. Rather, we counted on each other to be there when we really needed help, even when it wasn't convenient or fun.

This circle of giving and receiving help was new to me. Over the next couple of years, a few other families in our neighborhood wove into the circle Maureen and I had created, and we became a network of support for one another. The chime of an incoming text was often the signal of a mom in need. No matter the hour, help was being traded back and forth across this invisible web.

The only single mom in the group, I depended on the network more often than the others did, but I reciprocated in all the ways I could. Every Valentine's Day, for example, our house would be full of kids, leaving my friends free to enjoy some rare alone time with their husbands.

What none of us ever asked the others for: time to be alone, on our own, indulging in whatever made us happy—a sport, a book or, in my case, a boyfriend. When we asked someone else to step in, it was always for work or something equally "important." But after three very single years, I finally met a man who was handsome and brilliant and passionate but lived four hours away. I wondered whether seeing him was enough of a reason to lean on my network. I hesitated for days, debating this, but a voice inside my head was begging me to make this happen. Not wanting to end up married to my job, I finally broke down and asked a couple of my farm friends if they'd each take one of my kids for the weekend, and explained why. They both said yes with a smile.

It was a cold and snowy day when I left my daughter with her friend Luna and my son with his friend Nicholas, but to me it felt like the first day of summer vacation. As I drove away down the road, I was giddy with freedom and possibility for the first time in almost a decade.

Although single motherhood was an overwhelming responsibility at first—I wouldn't wish it on anyone—it brought me some significant gifts: It was a necessary wrecking ball, smashing the walls around me and freeing me to be available for the first time in my life to join a real sisterhood.

Because I didn't have friends to call on in our new life, the people I called on became my friends, which created a community of the most unexpected folks.

Because I didn't have friends to call on in our new life, the people I called on became my friends, which created a community of the most unexpected folks. I don't know if we would have chosen one another if the need hadn't been there. But in the end it didn't matter that we shopped at different stores or ate different foods or had different politics; we showed up for one another with an open heart.

Being part of this community taught me how to be a better friend—and a better person—in entirely new ways. By teaching me how to ask for help without shame, my new friends taught me how to be available to another person's needs without judgment. This vulnerability and generosity that we share is a glue that bonds us together.

My circle of farm friends helps me show up not only for work but also for love. They enable me to create a life that is full of clean laundry and meetings and also relationships and adventure and hope. And best of all, my children get to grow up in a community where support is natural and the asking is easy.

SUSIE ARNETT is a senior workshop programmer at the Kripalu Center in West Stockbridge, Massachusetts, and author of the book *Born Yogis*. ***@lightfieldmedia***



PHOTOGRAPHED BY DAVID SLIJPER

Eavesdropping on the talk of a lifetime

Power. Passions. Work. Mothers. And Sting.

When **Meryl Streep** visited the White House for an intimate conversation with **First Lady Michelle Obama**, they dug deep into the topics that accomplished women talk, worry and wonder about.

Read on

One of Mrs. Obama's initiatives involves mentoring young girls. Who were the female mentors in both of your lives? How did they inspire you?

MERYL STREEP: My mentor was my mother. She had no list of accomplishments behind her name, no awards or blah, blah, blah. My mother walked into a room and lit it up, and people were sad when she left. That, to me, is what really matters: who you touch and how. She was a mentor because she said to me, "Meryl, you're capable. You can be anything." She wasn't saying, "You're so great." She was saying, "You can do whatever you put your mind to. If you're lazy, you're not going to get it done. But if you put your mind to it, you can do anything." And I believed her. And she said it from the time I was little. And that made me arrogant [*laughs*].

MICHELLE OBAMA: It made you arrogant but capable. It's so interesting, because what you say about your mom is a mirror image of what I think about mine. If I point to anything that makes me who I am, it's that I have a whole lot of common sense. I've got a good mind and a good ability to read people and situations. A lot of that is because that's who my mother is.
MS: But are you like her? Are you *really* like her?
MO: I'm probably more like her than I'd imagined. I see it now that we're living together. Sometimes she does things that annoy me, and I'm like, Oh, I kind of do that, too [*laughs*]. My daughter just criticized me for that.

But she doesn't think I'm like her because she doesn't see herself as being as capable as she thinks I am. I always joke with her and say, "You raised me!" But she wasn't taught to value that in herself. She is a highly capable woman. She doesn't have degrees, but she can do anything she wants to do. And she raised us to do things [she was] afraid to do. So many women hold their kids tight because of their own fears. My mom pushed us out there. She doesn't like to travel, but she said to my brother when he had a chance to play pro basketball in Europe, "Here's a ticket. Get on the plane; you're going to Paris." She was able to understand that she shouldn't pass on her fears to us. I try to emulate that for my kids: not suffocating them with my mess.
MS: I'm not like my mother, so that's why her legacy sustains me. I'm much more of an introvert. I'm much more inclined to want to not say anything in public. When I have to be in the spotlight, I think to myself, Mary [Streep] could do it. It's a good thing, to imagine yourself doing something you think you can't. I do that every day, because basically, if I had my way, I'd just stay home and think about what I'm having for supper.

You both have daughters. What have you done to help them be strong in a world that can be tough on girls and treat them as less worthy?

MO: I talk to them a lot. One of the things my mom always said to me is, "You're not raising children; you're raising human beings," so create an open line of communication as early as possible. Now that my kids [Malia, 17, and Sasha, 14] are teenagers, they can often go to their peers for advice. I try to remind them that I actually do know the answers and that I don't want them getting their best advice from another 14-year-old. I never sit down and lecture them about self-confidence.
MS: They wouldn't listen.
MO: You sneak those conversations in when you're talking to them about their friendships, or about the challenges they faced in a game, or something that their dad said that made them mad. That's when I find they'll hear the messages most.
MS: The disadvantage to being First Lady, I would imagine, is that you can't drive them around in the car. Because then you're part of the steering wheel, and as long as you stay real still, you hear it all. You don't ask, "What happened at school today?" because you'll get nothing. You have to just shut up and listen.
MO: Let it flow.
MS: Yes, let it flow. But here's how I feel about that question, because people will say to me, "You've played so many strong women . . ." and I'll say, "Have you ever said to a man, 'You've played so many strong men?' " No! Because the expectation is [men] are varied. Why can't we have that expectation about women? My girls [Mamie, 32; Grace, 29; and Louisa, 24] came into the world strong—which was terrifying [*laughs*]. They share certain insecurities that came with time and the teen years. And they're different from my son [Henry, 36]. Raising boys is an entirely different challenge. But I think children learn by example. They look at you. You think they're not noticing—
MO: But they're watching everything.
MS: Especially the youngest one. She gets under the radar.
MO: That's the one who sits back, listens to everything and then replays it back to you.
MS: Yes!
MO: One child can confuse you into thinking you're a good parent, that you had something to do with [who they are]. And then you have the second and you think, What happened to this one? This one is totally different. And you realize all you're doing is guiding. You're just slightly steering the boat. They come [into the world] with so much of who they are already in place. It's easy to step in and push them hard in a [certain] direction. I have to fight that. It's better to give them space and support.
MS: In the long run, it's that support that sustains them.

What do you think is the biggest obstacle facing girls today?

MO: Education, education, education. There are too many kids who think high school is a pit stop to fame and fortune. I want girls in this country to think education is the coolest, most important thing they could ever do in their lives.
MS: I agree. And I think making education important to boys is just as imperative, because there are so many pulls on their attention.
MO: Absolutely.
MS: But there's another specific challenge facing women and girls right now: We're viewed as equals—but we're still not there yet. For the first time, we have the expectation that we can have a broad array of choices, that we could lead in almost any part of society. And yet we face resistance. We see that here at home in our government—in the House and the Senate. We see that in our boardrooms. We see that in Hollywood. The challenge for our girls, I think, is dealing with that resistance. How can we lift and defuse it, how do we make it so our equality is not so threatening? Our girls are going to have to contend with that. I contend with it right now in every realm I operate in.

You do? Even in Hollywood? I think people would be surprised to hear that.

MS: Do I in Hollywood? [*Laughs.*] Did you hear Patricia Arquette's Oscar speech [about the need to address wage disparity between

MICHELLE OBAMA: HAIR: JOHNNY WRIGHT; MAKEUP: CARL RAY; DRESS: TANYA TAYLOR. MERYL STREEP: HAIR AND MAKEUP: J. ROY HELLAND; WARDROBE AND ACCESSORIES: HER OWN

male and female workers]? She wasn't talking off the top of her head. It's absolutely true.

MO: My mom looks at women's lives today and says, "You all have so many choices." And she says it in a way that recognizes how hard it must be to have the choices.

MS: That's smart.

MO: There was a level of simplicity to her life, because the choices were limited. And sometimes we, as women, are critical of each other's choices. Should I have a career? What if I want to stay home and raise my kids? What if I don't want power? I encounter this because there are people who ask me all the time, "Are you going to run for office?" And many of them ask because I'm perceived as a strong woman and [another] strong First Lady, Hillary Clinton, is, in fact, running for office. But we're all different people with different aspirations and goals.



When you're trying to balance work and home life, how do you make the time you have to take away from your family for work really count?

MS: I don't think about my work as time away. I think of it as integrated into my whole life. But my work is different from other people's jobs: I'm portraying people, their concerns, their humanity, and I pull on my life at home for that. My girls recognize me in, say, my portrait of Margaret Thatcher. Still, when my kids were little, I wouldn't shoot a movie on location for more than two or three weeks at a time. That was my rule. In my mind, three weeks was the point where a toddler would sort of not even look up when you came back home. And *that* I didn't like.

MO: You'd be like, "Hey, I was gone for three weeks." And your kid is like, "Oh, can you pass me that toy?"

MS: "Oh, never mind, the babysitter will get it for me."

MO: When Barack was in the U.S. Senate, he was in Washington most of the week. Our kids were little, so I stayed [back home] in Chicago with them. I had lost a valued babysitter and replaced her with a babysitter who didn't drive.

MS: Big mistake.

MO: Big mistake. Malia was in nursery school; Sasha was at home. My mom or a babysitter would come over so I could work out at 5 in the morning. I'd get home by 6:30 AM, just in time to get Malia up, give her breakfast and get her in the car. Then I'd drop her off at nursery school, go in—because good mothers go in and talk to the teacher—get back in my car, drive to my office, which was on the same campus, park in the lot, walk to my office, work until about 2 PM, go to the parking lot, drive back to the school, sit in the pickup line, pick her up, drop her at home with the babysitter, go back to work and be back home by dinner. I did that for six months.

MS: And that was a good day. When it was a snow day or if somebody got sick . . .

MO: Yeah, don't let anybody be sick.

MS: The world is always defined by the margins and what happens in those margins.

MO: Absolutely. And I was always trying to figure out how to make my work work around my life, because I thought that's what good mothers did. But now there are all these different perspectives. Because the truth is, my girls didn't miss a beat. They weren't bothered by the fact that I worked. They didn't feel less loved. If we felt normal about it—Dad's gone, he'll be back on Friday—they felt normal about it, too.

MS: Because they felt safe and they felt loved.

MO: And that freed me up to think more broadly about those balances. And it took me a second to realize that my work makes me who I am. And that working was my choice.

MS: My son is a musician. When he was 21 and we were in the middle of Thanksgiving dinner—16 people sitting around the table—he said, "You know the great regret of my life?" And I thought, Oh God, it's when I didn't go to his school play or when I fell short in some way. And he said, "That you never gave me music lessons." And I said, "I *gave* you piano lessons. You had piano lessons for two years!" He had forgotten.

MO: He just thought he was a musical genius?

MS: He thought that he picked up a guitar at 15 and learned everything himself—which he did. But he had forgotten about [those music lessons]. At the time he just wanted to play baseball; I made him take piano. I guess it was my Tiger Mom phase. But his love for music came in its own time. At least I was able to say to him, "I tried."

What would you like your legacy to look like? What would you like your place in history to be?

MS: You go.

MO: I'm looking at you.

MS: You got this one.

MO: I want to feel like the things I did made a difference. That's one of the reasons I spend time [greeting people] on rope lines, because I'm always thinking, Maybe this interaction, particularly if I'm meeting kids, will change someone's life. Maybe if I stay one second longer and ask this little girl what she wants to be, if I tell her that I'm proud of her, if I give her a hug, maybe that one moment will make her go off and be great. That's how I think about the work I do [as First Lady]. It is a rare spotlight. I want to make sure I don't waste it.

MS: What you're saying reminded me of something Sting once told me. [*She pauses, smiles.*] Look at me CONTINUED ON PAGE 140



CURB APPEAL

This photo depicts the north side of the White House, perhaps the most famous view. Look familiar? Check it against the back of a $20 bill.



THE WHITE HOUSE *OPENS* ITS DOORS TO *MORE*

THERE'S NO HOME LIKE THIS HOME. WHITE HOUSE CURATOR WILLIAM ALLMAN TAKES US ON AN INSIDER'S TOUR AND TALKS HISTORY, FOLKLORE AND THE FIRST LADY'S COMMITMENT TO MAINTAINING AN OPEN-DOOR POLICY

BY SUSAN SWIMMER

PHOTOGRAPHED BY WILLIAM ABRANOWICZ





CURVED WALL OF THE
DIPLOMATIC RECEPTION ROOM



IF THESE WALLS COULD TALK

THE WALLPAPER'S 32 VIGNETTES, based on engravings from the 1820s, are impressively detailed, but the European makers took artistic license with historical accuracy. For example, in the scene above, African Americans are depicted as well-to-do, which was more likely to have been the case in France at that time than in the United States.

WHERE DIPLOMACY BEGINS

THE DIPLOMATIC Reception Room is a bit of a throughway, as it leads to the South Lawn, where events take place and Marine One departs. The panoramic wallpaper, "Views of North America," was printed in 1834 by Jean Zuber et Cie in Rixheim, Alsace, France. Lest you think the White House can't be thrifty, this paper was repurposed. William Allman, the White House curator, explains: "It was rescued from a house near Camp David that was set to be demolished. A local antiques dealer paid the demo crew $50 to let him scrape the paper from the walls, and he later sold it to Jacqueline Kennedy." This room was most famously the site of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's fireside chats in the 1930s and '40s.

It's hard not to feel humbled standing just outside the gates of the White House. It's pristine. It's majestic. It's incredibly well fortified: Entry requires a multiple-step security check that makes the screening at an international airport seem like a supermarket checkout line. But I stick it out; after all, I've been told there are two energetic pups that are eager to make my acquaintance. Soon I am playing with the First Dogs.

The White House was planned by George Washington, the only President never to have lived there. In 1800, John Adams and his wife, Abigail, moved in, taking over the largest house in the United States at the time (it cost $232,372 to build—attention, Zillow.com—even though it lacked running water, central heat and electricity). Today the house features six levels, 28 fireplaces and 132 rooms (including 35 bathrooms, and FYI—the one in the Vermeil Room is *lovely*). It has long been called the People's House, but it has never been more inclusive than during the Obamas' tenure. Michelle Obama has an open-door policy, especially for young people: Kids from across the country help tend the vegetable garden, meet musical performers before their official events and preview state dinners (taste testing included). "For them to walk through the doors of the White House as invited guests and sit in these rooms where history has been made, that's one of those life-changing moments," Mrs. Obama says.

The point is, it's not just a family home. It is a museum, work space, command center and repository of our nation's history. It has opened its doors to dignitaries and starlets, poets and power brokers, politicians and philanthropists and thousands of ordinary citizens. It gets a lot of use: There are 3,000 tourists a day and 250 receptions a year. It also gets a bit of misuse, such as when three visiting Dallas Cowboys football players sat on an 1815 Duncan Phyfe sofa and broke it. Fortunately for all of us, the house endures.

A VIEW TO THE WASHINGTON PORTRAIT

GREEN WITH FRENZY

ONE FOOT inside the Green Room (right), and my thoughts turn to curling up with a good book and a glass of wine. In reality, the room is occasionally used as a waiting area for VIPs before an event (similar to a greenroom in a television studio, a pop-cultural coincidence that is lost on no one). The nomenclature had humble beginnings: A green canvas floor covering was put down in 1808, the first use of the color in the room; by 1825 the space was officially referred to as the Green Room. Emerald-colored furniture was added over the years (most of the current pieces by Pat Nixon). The view into the East Room (left) reveals the famous 1797 portrait of George Washington by Gilbert Stuart. When the house was set ablaze by British troops in 1814, Dolley Madison realized she wouldn't be able to get the portrait off the wall in time (it was bolted on). A quick thinker, she had men break the frame in order to remove the canvas. The Stuart painting is, hands down, the most valuable piece of art in the White House. Allman points to another painting he likes, *Sand Dunes at Sunset* (not pictured), by Henry Ossawa Tanner, which he says is unusual because the artist incorporated actual sand into the paint.



THE BUILDERS, BY JACOB LAWRENCE



MANTEL CLOCK



EMERALD GEM

THOMAS JEFFERSON used it as a dining room, James Madison to sign the nation's first declaration of war, the Monroes to play cards. The Green Room was one of many Jacqueline Kennedy famously helped restore, adding the silk wall covering and a number of the important works of art that cover the walls, salon-like (she had a keen interest in authentic historical pieces and works by American artists).



ONCE IN A BLUE MOOD

MORE'S TEAM was treated to a roaring fire (opposite, bottom right) thanks to the White House fire starters, who arrived with a rolling cart of supplies to construct a photo-ready blaze. The Blue Room exhibits the official White House Christmas tree each year.

HANNIBAL CLOCK





GILDED BELLANGÉ FURNITURE

INSIDE THE OVAL

WITH ITS OVAL SHAPE, the Blue Room fools some into thinking it's *the* Oval, but in fact the White House was designed with three stacked oval rooms, an unusual element championed by George Washington. Why? Washington's home in Philadelphia had an oval-ended room, Allman says, and he liked it because "he never wanted to get backed into a corner." The mantel clock, a gilded depiction of Hannibal, the African general (above), is considered one of the most valuable items in the White House. "He's a man with a checkered reputation, to say the least," says Allman. In 1817, clocks were fashionable *objets,* and the White House wanted one for its collection. But rumor has it that finding a clothed figure was a challenge. The gilded furniture is a standout: President Monroe purchased a 53-piece suite made by Pierre-Antoine Bellangé, a Parisian. It remained in place for 40 years, but when styles changed, all but one table was sold at auction in 1860 (the White House regularly carted off old furnishings to be sold, which was legal until 1903). Allman says that according to White House folklore, Mrs. Kennedy found the remaining table in the White House carpenter's shop and embarked on a quest (i.e., publicity tour) to locate the 52 lost pieces of the suite. Amazingly, people came forward with a few "returns," and the White House now has 10 of the original pieces. When I ask Allman if he watches *Antiques Roadshow* more carefully than the rest of us, I'm only half joking.



LINCOLN PORTRAIT
IN THE STATE DINING ROOM



MANTEL INSCRIPTION

DINNER IS SERVED

THE STATE DINING ROOM (left) has served various purposes over the years—office, drawing room—but most recently has hosted major events, such as the entertainment for the 2015 state dinner for the Prime Minister of Japan, which occurred not 20 hours before we arrived. (Massive floral arrangements that included white lilies the size of basketballs were everywhere.) The space was expanded over time to hold more people (as the nation grew, so did the nation's guest list). The focal point is the portrait of Abraham Lincoln, painted by George P.A. Healy in 1869, a gift from the Lincoln family. The surround is a marvel: It has a centerplate (below left) engraved with a passage from the first letter John Adams wrote to his wife when he arrived at the White House, in 1800: "I pray heaven to bestow the best of blessings on this house and all that shall hereafter inhabit it. May none but honest and wise men ever rule under this roof."

THE NEW OLD FAMILY DINING ROOM

ALL FIRST FAMILIES like to leave their mark, and for the Obamas this took the form of adding 20th-century art and design to the state rooms. "They share a real interest in abstract art," Allman says. "The question was, if we were to acquire modern art for the permanent collection, how would it fit in, and where would it go?" The answer was the Old Family Dining Room, where almost all First Families ate their meals until Mrs. Kennedy relocated her family dinners to the private quarters. Mrs. Obama and Allman embarked on a plan to renovate. Important artwork—paintings by Rauschenberg, Albers and Alma Thomas (her canvas, opposite)—was procured through donations, and a new rug was created (up close you can see the metallic threading in the weave, which makes it look as if the rug were sprinkled with fairy dust). Fresh draperies were hung, and an Art Deco tea service, made for the 1939 World's Fair, was added to a sideboard. The American-made table and chairs, previously acquired and retained for the redo, are antiques. "The goal is to keep evolving the space," says Allman. "Someone will offer us a great modern piece at some point, and we'll put it in."



A MODERN MUSEUM

THE OBAMAS' official state china includes white plates with Kailua Blue accents (inspired by the waters off the coast of the President's home state of Hawaii) and gold-rimmed charger plates. The glassware is a new iteration of a set first made for Jacqueline Kennedy.



STEVIE CALDWELL, Wesleyan University, class of '99

WHEN YOUR PARENTS DIDN'T GO TO **COLLEGE**



MARYELLEN GORDON, Fordham University, class of '83

IN TODAY'S KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY, EDUCATION BEYOND HIGH SCHOOL IS ESSENTIAL—BUT IT'S ALSO REALLY HARD FOR KIDS WITH NO FAMILY PATH TO FOLLOW AND NO ONE TO EASE THE WAY. HERE, THE STORIES OF SMART, ACCOMPLISHED WOMEN WHO ONCE FACED THOSE OBSTACLES. AND IDEAS ON HOW YOU CAN **HELP THE NEXT GENERATION**

BY REBECCA WEBBER / PHOTOGRAPHED BY JOSS McKINLEY

Tasha Kornegay, now 42, first started hearing about higher education when she was not much bigger than her backpack. "My mother told me, 'You have to make good grades. You have to get into college,' " she says. Her mother, who was just 16 when Kornegay was born, never finished high school. "She realized she should have gone, that education was pretty much the only way out of our situation," says Kornegay, who grew up in a housing project in Durham, North Carolina. Her mother worked for a dry cleaner, earning minimum wage—which at the time was less than $4 an hour—and her family sometimes ran out of food before the next paycheck arrived. "My mom said, 'You have to go to school, because look at me.' "

The daunting rise in college costs is well documented. They've tripled in the past 35 years, while wages have barely budged. But behind these scary numbers hides an inescapable fact: People with bachelor's degrees earn almost twice as much as their high school–only counterparts—nearly a million dollars more over a lifetime. And money is not the only benefit of a diploma. Studies show that people with more education enjoy healthier, happier and even longer lives.

Labor-market experts predict that by 2020, 65 percent of all jobs will require some form of postsecondary education (compared with 28 percent in the 1970s). But the young people least likely to get a BA or BS are those whose parents, like Kornegay's mom, never made it past high school themselves. And the vicious circle continues: They can land only low-wage jobs; their incomes keep them in poverty; and their own children are less likely to reach for higher education, even though they may be fully capable of attaining the most prestigious degrees. Kornegay has a bachelor's, a master's and a PhD. She works as a mental health therapist in private practice in Apex, North Carolina.

Those of us lucky enough to follow our parents on the path to a college degree will never understand just how challenging the process can be for the uninitiated. The advantages go beyond what extra household income can buy; baked-in "college knowledge" goes a long way. Parents in the know nudge their kids into AP classes and make them study for the SATs. They take them on college visits and help them craft the perfect essay. Meanwhile, first-generation students mostly fend for themselves. Below, some now-successful women talk about what their struggle was *really* like. Once you've heard their stories, you may find yourself wanting to reach out and help this year's crop of first-gen college hopefuls. (For ideas, see "How You Can Have More Impact," page 102.)

"THE WORD

college was never said in my house when I was growing up. That was like talking about going to the moon," says Susan Avery, a 55-year-old New Yorker who, after a successful career in journalism, now counsels students in a public high school about their college options. "My family was poor and not college educated, so what was encouraged

THE FIRST LADY'S REACH HIGHER INITIATIVE

A first-generation college student herself, Michelle Obama understands the pitfalls of trying to go beyond where one's parents have gone before. "She knew when she got to Princeton that based on where she started, she was just going to have to work really hard . . . and out-hustle everyone to be successful," says Eric Waldo, executive director of the First Lady's **Reach Higher** initiative, which focuses on postsecondary attainment for everyone.

FLOTUS emphasizes the importance of education when she talks to students, and discusses the academic preparation kids need to succeed on campus. **Reach Higher** has partnered with the College Board on the All-In program to get more students into Advanced Placement classes and works with the National Summer Learning Association to help students keep up their college-prep momentum during the summer break.

The First Lady wants all students to know that financial aid can help them afford a degree. Last year **Reach Higher** partnered with Get Schooled and MTV to broadcast a town hall meeting on the topic. This year she challenged high schools to get more students to fill out the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid), and she asked colleges to offer immersion experiences to prospective students. She also applauds communities that put the spotlight on college attendance with events like College Signing Day or Wear-Your-College-Gear Day.

Finally, Mrs. Obama is an outspoken supporter of school counselors. At last summer's annual conference of the American School Counselor Association, she told the crowd, "While we talk a great deal about the role of teachers and principals and parents in preparing kids for higher education, often engaged school counselors like all of you are the deciding factor in whether young people attend college or not." She'd love to increase counselors' training and decrease their caseloads. To draw attention to their usually behind-the-scenes work, for the first time ever, she held the School Counselor of the Year ceremony at the White House this year. "You can think about **Reach Higher** as sort of the First Lady as school-counselor-in-chief for the country," says Waldo. (To learn more, visit whitehouse.gov/reach-higher.) —R.W.

HAIR AND MAKEUP: PAGE 96: LORI GREENE FOR ENNIS INC. PAGE 97: TSIPPORAH USING MAC COSMETICS



TASHA KORNEGAY, University of North Carolina, Charlotte, class of '96. MA, North Carolina Central University; PhD, Walden University

was to get a job as soon as you could. I worked all through high school." Her parents had civil service jobs, and they wanted Avery to become a secretary, like her mother. As a result, "I rarely did homework," she says, and graduated near the bottom of her high school class. "Every single friend of mine went to college, but I truly thought, I'm not college material. I didn't feel bad about it. It wasn't my path; it was their path."

Many children of today's less educated workers face the same problem. At home, terms like *professor, major* and *student loans* are never mentioned and may as well not exist. Melissa Mesku, 33, grew up in a small California town; her mother was a purchaser for the school district, her father a dental technician. Mesku never thought about college until her friends began showing up at school with acceptance letters. "I thought, Oh shit! When did that happen?" she says. Not exactly an underachiever—she was the editor of her high school newspaper—Mesku says she "didn't know anyone who had been to college, had never heard anyone talk about college, so college simply never occurred to me."

Even if a first-generation student does see herself as academically qualified for college, misunderstandings about financial aid may cause her to write herself off. "At the school where I'm a counselor, one kid's mom is a housekeeper who earns around $16,000 a year," recounts Avery. "She said, 'My mom said I'm not going to get any financial aid because she earns a living.' She was under the impression that you have to be jobless to get financial aid. I told her, 'With all due respect to your mom, on that point she is 100 percent wrong.'" »

HAIR AND MAKEUP: KIM KONSLER/ZENOBIA AGENCY



MELISSA MESKU, University of California, Berkeley, class of '03

"Just as girls once learned very quickly that science wasn't for them, first-generation students can learn that college is not for them, if we're not careful," says former urban-school counselor Mandy Savitz-Romer, now a senior lecturer at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, where she specializes in counseling and college planning. Right now, she says, "some kids have already given up on the college idea by ninth grade." Which is why those who work in schools—administrators, teachers and counselors—play such a crucial role for first-generation students who aren't hearing about college at home. "This work starts in middle school," says Savitz-Romer. "School counselors can start talking to kids about college, what jobs require college, even just helping them figure out what they're good at and what their passions are. What kind of place do they want to make for themselves in this world? That can start very early."

THE ROLE of school counselors (the modern term for the outdated *guidance counselor*) intensifies in high school, where they can make or break students' college dreams. "I still remember how one of my high school counselors told me that I shouldn't apply to Princeton," said First Lady Michelle Obama, 51 (a first-gen herself, along with her older brother), in a speech at Booker T. Washington High School in Atlanta last September. "[She] told me I would never make it there, that I was setting my sights too high. Can you believe that? She told me, 'Don't bother.'"

Stevie Caldwell, 38, had more encouragement at her high school. "I was lucky enough to have a good counselor to talk to about the process, including how to apply for financial aid and scholarships and fill out the necessary forms," says Caldwell, whose single mother had struggled

HAIR AND MAKEUP: TSIPPORAH USING MAC COSMETICS

to feed her four children and keep the utilities on when Caldwell was growing up in Cleveland. "I knew I didn't want to live like that, and I got the idea that college was a surefire way not to." Her counselor and her English teacher, who oversaw her academic progress and proofread her college-application essays, cheered her on. Caldwell graduated from Wesleyan University, in Middletown, Connecticut, where she studied photography and sang in an a cappella group. She now works as a development-operations engineer in Boston. "I didn't get a degree in the field that became my career, but college was still valuable—it exposed me to the world and taught me how to think," she says. "I also met my wife there. That's huge."

Many students who need their school counselor's help will have to wait a very long time. "In some states, they have caseloads of 700 to 800 students," says Savitz-Romer. In fact, in California, the state with the highest student-to-counselor ratio, there are 1,000 students for every counselor. The caseload should be 250, according to the American School Counselor Association. Most counselors spend only part of their time talking to students about college, because they are also dealing with social issues such as bullying or emotional stumbling blocks such as grief and eating disorders.

"Counseling or advising is essential," says Dewayne Matthews, vice president of strategy development at the Lumina Foundation, which focuses on increasing the number of Americans with high-quality postsecondary credentials. A study by the College Board found that adding one counselor to a school would increase the number of students attending a four-year college by 10 percent. "This is an inconvenient truth," says Matthews. "No one knows how to deal with the need on the scale that we need it."

Some parents of first-generation students do dive in to try to help their kids navigate the college process. "I remember sitting with my mother at our long dining room table, with all the financial-aid papers, and being on the brink of being overwhelmed many times," says Maryellen Gordon, 53, a brand consultant in Brooklyn whose father had emigrated from Ireland. "But my mother and father were both so encouraging and supportive, I knew I couldn't give up. And my mother was very financially savvy and organized, so the two of us were able to work through everything together."

These days the Internet makes information much more accessible. A good place for prospective students to start their research is the College Board website (collegeboard.org), where they can create a profile with their preferences and make a list of schools they might want to attend. The site also provides information about such tests as the SAT, college-application deadlines and financial-aid forms (see page 44 for a list of other helpful websites and apps). "Online is good, but sometimes you really want the one-on-one advice and attention and explanation," says Rachel Fishman, an education policy analyst at the New America Foundation. Community organizations may provide such help through programs at local libraries, YMCAs and student centers. "In Boston the YMCA sponsors College Goal Sunday, which is a whole day dedicated to helping students fill out the FAFSA," she says, referring to the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. »

FAMOUS FIRST-GENS

Prominent women share their college struggles

Acclaimed author **Mary Gordon** knew that she was college-bound but also that she needed to stay close to her family's home in Valley Stream, New York. "I couldn't leave town because my mother was physically handicapped, so I somehow figured out that the best school in New York was Barnard," says Gordon, now 65 and a professor of English at her alma mater. "I wrote to them, got a catalog and did everything myself." But her conservative Catholic high school disliked the college she had chosen. "The principal refused to send my transcripts to Barnard because it was non-Catholic. I was just so ferocious at the time that I called Barnard and said, 'You have to tell them they can't do that.' They did, and I got in."

But when she arrived at the Barnard campus, Gordon faced the kinds of obstacles today's first-generation kids still encounter. "I remember one young woman who had a lot of money saying, 'Oh, I'm having trouble with this paper; I think I'll go buy a new pair of boots," she recalls. "I was like, 'I have one pair of boots, and they will last me for all of college.' I was very much aware that they had a kind of entitlement that I didn't have."

"College is fundamentally a middle-class milieu," says **Ruth Simmons**, 70, who became the first black president of an Ivy League school, Brown University, in 2001. She went to Dillard University, in New Orleans, from her home deep in the inner city, wearing clothes her high school teachers had pulled from their closets. During visits to her parents, she says, she "didn't want people to think I was different because I went to college. Yes, I was taking a course on existentialism, which was having a profound effect on how I was seeing my life, but I knew not to talk about it. I didn't talk about fancy things. I didn't talk about the real experience I was having in college, because it separated me from people at home. It can be a little bit of a lonely experience for first-generation students because of that."

Donna Brazile, 55, the political powerhouse who serves as vice chair of the Democratic National Committee, started saving up early to fund her college education. "I had four little businesses," she says—landscaping, recycling, bait-and-tackle and elder assistance. Those earnings, along with grants, scholarships and part-time work, allowed her to graduate with less than $2,000 in debt. "The cost of college has gone up 300 percent, and I worry about that," she says. "Plus, kids find their way through college for a job that doesn't exist anymore." Her advice to today's students is to study something they love. "If you have to borrow for it," she says, "think of it as an investment in yourself and in your future."

"You have to see beyond the momentary discomfort of not having the same clothes as the other students, of not being able to go on a ski trip to Switzerland on spring break, to the tremendous opportunity you have to move your life ahead," says Simmons. "Focus on what's important and excel." In the end, she notes, the education itself will help you catch up. —R.W.

Mentors, teachers, coaches and volunteers can help fill the college-knowledge gap for first-generation students. "I got lucky," says Mesku. "My boyfriend's mother worked at a community college, and she took me under her wing. She suggested some classes and helped me find rewarding work on campus." After two successful years there, "taking a little bit of everything," Mesku moved on to the University of California, Berkeley, where she got a degree in rhetoric. She has since launched two businesses, one selling dental technology, the other in publishing.

"It ultimately boils down to millions of one-on-one relationships" between students and mentors, says Matthews. "Every one of them is valuable, and people should be looking for opportunities to do this, through their church, through community organizations, maybe through a state program like Tennessee Promise." Because for all the information that's available online, sometimes a student still needs someone she can call with what feels like a dumb question, such as, "What should I eat the morning of the SATs?" or "What's this 'adjusted gross income' number that the FAFSA wants?"

HOW YOU CAN HAVE MORE IMPACT

YOU'RE PROBABLY lucky enough to have something you could share—math or writing skills, a bit of money, some free Saturday afternoons. Would-be students could benefit from any of these.

Go to the Lumina Foundation's MoveED map to find programs in your community that help aspiring college students. See how you might volunteer your skills. For example, if you're a CPA or just have a knack for numbers, you could help students fill out their FAFSA forms (moveed.org/partner/lumina/).

Become a mentor. Share your college knowledge with a first-generation applicant, whether it's your neighbor, your niece or a kid from the high school down the street. Mentoring can be a time commitment, but it can make a huge difference. "Think about showing a student what it's like to be a working professional and what opportunities are open to them," suggests Rachel Fishman, an education policy analyst at the New America Foundation.

Establish an emergency grant at a local college. "People like to set up scholarships for bright young people who are probably going to college anyway, but providing a $300 loan for someone whose car broke down can make all the difference," says Dewayne Matthews, vice president of strategy development at the Lumina Foundation. Alternatively, read the requests on sites like GoFundMe (check the education section) to help a student with a specific need.

Call a local school district, or the principal's office of a high school, in an underserved part of town. Offer to donate your time, perhaps editing essays or doing SAT prep.

Organize a career fair by calling a handful of friends in different occupations. Have them gather at a community center at 10 AM on a Saturday to talk to high school kids about their professions.

Encourage your alma mater to recruit more first-generation and low-income students. "Let's be candid: That might hurt the college in the rankings," says Matthews. Help the school make this transition. "Too often alums are advocates for traditions and keeping things the way they were," he says. "That needs to change." —R.W.

WE ALL know that college has become very expensive, but unless you've put a kid through school recently, you may not fully grasp just how much costs have skyrocketed. "It's invariably shocking to people when they sit down and look at how much tuition their alma mater actually charges and ask themselves how would they pay for that," says Matthews.

I tried it. Total cost (including room, board and fees) for a year at Georgetown University in 1993, when I was a student there: about $23,000 ($37,360 in today's dollars). Cost now: $67,000—and $48,000 is for tuition alone. (I borrowed money, and any future child of mine would need to do so as well. It took me about 12 years to pay off my loans.)

"Students are really feeling the squeeze like never before," says Fishman. "You can't work your way through college these days. Just multiply out minimum wage and compare it with the cost of attending a public institution."

Let's see: One year working full time at the federal minimum wage of $7.25 per hour—that's $15,080. (And a full-time job doesn't leave much room for studying.) Median cost of a year at a four-year public institution: $18,943.

Even if a student gets financial aid, the financial challenges don't stop. "I had no cash," says Kornegay of her arrival at the University of North Carolina, Charlotte, in 1991. "I didn't think I needed it. I had food and shelter. I just wanted to concentrate on my schoolwork." But after two weeks on campus, when she'd run through her supply of clean clothing, "I went down to the laundry room, and I saw, oh, you have to put quarters in! I called my mom and told her, 'You have to have money to wash clothes.' She said, 'That doesn't make any sense. Where are you supposed to get that money?' She said, 'You can do what I do when I don't have soap powder. Wash your undies in the sink.' I did that secretly, so my roommates wouldn't know, until I got a job."

And for Kornegay, the cost of laundry was the least of it. She also needed books for her classes—which cost hundreds of dollars each semester—a parking pass and more meals than her plan allotted. "My best friend always had excess money on her meal card, and she would just hand it over to me," she recalls. But some things Kornegay had to skip altogether. "There were a lot of



LAURA MOROWITZ, Brooklyn College, class of '87. MA and PhD, Institute of Fine Arts, New York University

organizations I thought I could have excelled in, but there were fees," she says. "I wanted to join the AKAs, a sorority. They came to me and said, 'We're going to have a rush, and we think you'd be great.' But after I realized there were membership dues and fees, I had to tell them, 'I would love to join your group, but I can't afford it.'"

SOMETIMES the most critical months for these students are before they've even set foot on campus. "There's a phenomenon called summer melt," says Fishman. "Students go through everything to get into college, and then they don't show up in the fall." It accounts for the loss of 10 to 20 percent of a class. Yet simple interventions can ward off problems like this. A study published last October by Harvard University Press found that sending low-income students text reminders about upcoming college deadlines (with links to a live counselor) boosted attendance from 63 to 70 percent.

Students often disappear because they've made a mistake they think is significant but really isn't. They miss a deadline and think, "I forgot to send in my deposit; I guess I'm not going to college anymore." Or they don't sign up for a dorm room, and say, "Oh my God, I have no housing. I can't go." What they don't tell themselves, says Fishman, is "'I can contact somebody and advocate for myself.' If someone has gone to college before you, they explain how to work the system."

For those who do make it to campus, the real work begins. Getting through college isn't easy, even for kids who CONTINUED ON PAGE 140

HAIR AND MAKEUP: TSIPPORAH USING MAC COSMETICS



THE BEST OF AMERICAN

"AMERICAN SPORTSWEAR WAS BORN OF A WOMAN'S LIFESTYLE. A WOMAN WHO JUGGLES THE PROFESSIONAL WITH THE PERSONAL WITHOUT A LOT OF TIME OR CLOSET SPACE. FOR ME, THAT MEANS SHE NEEDS DAY-INTO-NIGHT VERSATILITY—CLOTHES THAT ARE SIMPLE AND SOPHISTICATED AND CAN BE WORN IN MORE THAN ONE WAY."

—DONNA KARAN

DONNA KARAN NEW YORK *cotton blend sleeveless bodysuit, wool and silk skirt, leather studded belt*; **DONNAKARAN.COM. JIMMY CHOO** *snakeskin sandals*; **JIMMYCHOO.COM.**



"TO ME, AMERICAN FASHION IS STREAMLINED WITH A SENSE OF FUNCTIONALITY. IT SPEAKS TO WOMEN WHO ARE VERY FORWARD LOOKING AS WELL AS CONFIDENT AND MODERN."

—FRANCISCO COSTA, WOMEN'S CREATIVE DIRECTOR OF CALVIN KLEIN COLLECTION

CALVIN KLEIN COLLECTION *wool coat*; **212-292-9000. PROENZA SCHOULER** *cotton blend pleated knit skirt*; **212-585-3200.**

DESIGNERS

THERE'S A DEMOCRACY TO CLOTHES THAT FAVOR MODERN SHAPES AND AN EDITED COLOR PALETTE. WEARABLE AND STYLISH, THEY ARE NEITHER FLASHY NOR FLASH IN THE PAN. **GUGU MBATHA-RAW** MAKES THE MOST OF THE UNMISTAKABLE AMERICAN DESIGN AESTHETIC

PHOTOGRAPHED BY PAUL JUNG / STYLED BY JONNY LICHTENSTEIN



"AMERICA INVENTED COOL! AS AN AMERICAN DESIGNER, I TRY TO KEEP MY DESIGN HEAD OPEN, FREE AND CHALLENGED. I BELIEVE MY FASHION CAREER IS A METAPHOR FOR MY LIFE AND THE ATTITUDE THAT DEFINES OUR COUNTRY."

—VERA WANG



"AMERICAN SPORTSWEAR WAS ALWAYS SET IN REALITY, AND THAT IDEA HAS ALWAYS RESONATED WITH ME. HERE, PEOPLE WANT TO WEAR INTERESTING PIECES EVERY DAY, NOT JUST FOR SPECIAL OCCASIONS."

—MARIA CORNEJO

ABOVE: **VERA WANG COLLECTION** *sleeveless wool coat with ivory-pearl and crystal pockets, and georgette pants*; **212-382-2184. GIUSEPPE ZANOTTI DESIGN** *velvet mules*; **GIUSEPPEZANOTTIDESIGN .COM.** LEFT: **ZERO + MARIA CORNEJO** *tweed coat, button-down shirt and pants*; **212-925-3849.** OPPOSITE: **J. MENDEL** *sleeveless leather dress*; **JMENDEL.COM. CHRISTIAN LOUBOUTIN** *filet and leather heels*; **CHRISTIANLOUBOUTIN.COM.**



"THERE'S A SPORTY EASE AND CONFIDENCE TO AMERICAN FASHION THAT I RELATE TO AS A DESIGNER. THE MORE EMBELLISHED AND HIGHLY CRAFTED A DESIGN, THE MORE I WANT IT TO LOOK AND FEEL RELAXED AND EFFORTLESS."
—GILLES MENDEL

"WE'RE INTERESTED IN CODES OF CLASSIC AMERICAN SPORTSWEAR. LIKE WHAT DOES AN ARGYLE MEAN TO US, WHAT DOES A POLO MEAN TO US, WHAT DOES A PRINCE OF WALES CHECK MEAN TO US? WHAT'S OUR VERSION OF ALL THOSE THINGS?"

—LAZARO HERNANDEZ OF PROENZA SCHOULER



SOURCE: "A POST-SHOW INTERVIEW WITH PROENZA SCHOULER." *VOGUE*. SEPTEMBER 12, 2014; "REVIEW/FASHION FROM DE LA RENTA, SENSIBLE CHIC." *NEW YORK TIMES*. JANUARY 28, 1993





"I WANT TO MAKE CLOTHES THAT PEOPLE WEAR, NOT STYLES THAT WILL MAKE A BIG SPLASH ON THE RUNWAY."
—**OSCAR DE LA RENTA, 1993**



LEFT: **PROENZA SCHOULER** *cotton blend cable-knit dress and woven-leather heels*; **212-585-3200.** ABOVE: **OSCAR DE LA RENTA** *strapless silk jumpsuit*; **212-288-5810. JIMMY CHOO** *suede sandals*; **JIMMYCHOO.COM.**

Gugu Mbatha-Raw's got range. In the 2013 drama *Belle*, she played Dido, the illegitimate daughter of a slave and a nobleman, the picture of 18th-century aristocratic poise in corset-defined gowns and a classic pearl choker. By the time she received a British Independent Film Award for the role, she had appeared as a suicidal pop star in the indie hit *Beyond the Lights*; shortly after that, she portrayed a half-deer/half-human in *Jupiter Ascending*. She creates characters of vastly different backgrounds, eras and temperaments, inhabiting each as comfortably as a bird in a feather-lined nest. "Gugu's a proper actress," says *Belle* director Amma Asante. "It's real talent she's expressing when you see her up there literally being these other characters."

The daughter of a South African doctor and a British nurse, Mbatha-Raw—her first name, Gugulethu, means "our pride" in Zulu—has always had a passion for performing, starting ballet classes at age four in her hometown near Oxford and adding tap and jazz soon after. "My mum didn't always love her work," says the actress, who went on to graduate from the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. "She would have liked to have the opportunities I had to be more creative. To be able to have that in my job was the ultimate."

On the red carpet, Mbatha-Raw, 32, is learning the role of fashion plate, favoring designers such as Carolina Herrera, Narciso Rodriguez and Oscar de la Renta and attending last year's Met Gala in a custom Lanvin dress. Even out of the spotlight she's comfortably chic, wearing silk ankle-zippered pants, roomy enough that she can sit cross-legged on an L.A. hotel patio recently—a posture facilitated by her long-standing yoga practice. More flexibility: Next up we'll be seeing her as Will Smith's wife in *Concussion*, about the doctor who linked brain injuries in the NFL to dementia; as an attorney opposite Keanu Reeves in *The Whole Truth*; and as a house slave who falls for Matthew McConaughey's Confederate soldier in *The Free State of Jones*. One day she hopes to voice a Pixar character. "That must be the most fun," she says, "to be free of what you look like and invent yourself as an animated creature. A squirrel—why not?" **—MARGOT DOUGHERTY**



"THE MIXTURE OF SOMETHING TIMELESS WITH SOMETHING UNEXPECTED IS A HALLMARK OF AMERICAN STYLE, LIKE A CLASSIC LBD WITH AN INTERESTING NECK AND AN ASYMMETRICAL BOW."
—MICHAEL KORS



MICHAEL KORS *crepe bouclé sequin-embroidered dress*; **MICHAELKORS.COM. GIUSEPPE ZANOTTI DESIGN** *patent leather sandals*; **GIUSEPPEZANOTTIDESIGN.COM.** For prices and links to products, go to more.com/wheretobuy.

HAIR: ROB TALTY AT FORWARD ARTISTS USING ORIBE HAIR CARE; MAKEUP: KARA YOSHIMOTO BUA USING CHANEL ROUGE COCO SHINE 93 INTIME AT STARWORKSARTISTS.COM; MANICURE: NETTIE DAVIS; SET DESIGN: KELLY FONDRY



“Where you are born can determine whether you live or die. And that is wrong.” —Barbara Bush

Women working wonders

Intractable problems.
Impossible situations. Giant barriers facing kids around the world. These **five crusaders** refuse to stand by and do nothing

BY VIRGINIA SOLE-SMITH

PHOTOGRAPHED BY PETER HAPAK

Barbara Bush

CEO and cofounder of Global Health Corps

NEW YORK CITY

AS A COLLEGE STUDENT, Bush accompanied her father, President George W. Bush, on a trip to Africa for the launch of the United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. "I saw all these sick people lining up in the street for a chance at getting antiretroviral drugs that we had readily available back home," she says. "That's when I realized that where you are born can determine whether you live or die. And that is wrong."

Back home, Bush began studying global health, later working with the Red Cross Children's Hospital in Cape Town, South Africa. "I would talk to mothers who had traveled 12 hours to get their child medical care," Bush says. "I started to ask, How can we fix the bigger health system?" In 2008 that thinking led her to launch Global Health Corps (GHC), a nonprofit that sends young people from all over the world to work with health and development organizations in the U.S. and Africa. The 2014–15 class of 128 fellows speaks a total of 40 languages, and of the 53 organizations with which they are partnered, 20 focus on maternal, infant and children's health.

"We do our work so doctors can focus on treating patients," Bush says. "Medical professionals shouldn't be worrying about logistics." GHC fellows in Uganda, for instance, worked with moped drivers to return infant HIV-test results more quickly to hospitals. "It used to take 30 days to find out whether an infant born to an HIV-positive mother was carrying the disease, and by then the information was almost useless," Bush says, explaining that medication must begin immediately. "Now we can get those results back in three days." With the right intervention, only 2 percent of infants will contract the virus. For Bush, this work is imperative: "Health is a basic human right."

Anita Jones-Mueller

President and founder of Healthy Dining

SAN DIEGO

JONES-MUELLER began developing her passion for nutrition at age 10, when her dad went on a diet. "Every night he would tell me what he ate, and it was my job to read through the calorie-count book and keep him on track," she says. She still does the same job—only now it's for 300 restaurant brands in 60,000 locations across the United States.

In 2007, Jones-Mueller launched HealthyDiningFinder.com to help families track down a more nutritious, less fattening, dietitian-approved dinner when they eat out. She and her team analyze the nutritional content of menus and post the best choices online; they also work with chefs to create new, healthier recipes. The program was partly funded by the National Institutes of Health, and restaurants also pay to have their menus analyzed and to collaborate on more nutritious options. "The great thing about the restaurant industry is that it wants to make its customers happy," Jones-Mueller says. "So as long as we could prove there were people interested in healthier menu options, we got their attention."

Four years ago, Healthy Dining Finder decided to target the final frontier of unhealthy eating: kids' menus. The company's Kids Live Well program (now involving 142 brands) was inspired by Jones-Mueller's experience as a mother feeding two growing girls. "I work long hours, so we ate out a lot, and it was a constant struggle to find the girls something other than french fries!" she says. "For many busy families, fast food is how they get dinner on the table, so we've got to give our kids better choices at those venues." This year Jones-Mueller recruited San Diego restaurants to help fund playground equipment, gardens and other health initiatives in public schools, and she plans to take the concept nationwide.

Darlene Oliver

Executive director of Public Allies Chicago

CHICAGO

"I'M A SOUTH SIDE GIRL," says Oliver proudly. "So I know firsthand: There is gold in these underserved communities. Our job is to find it and polish it up." Oliver worked her way through college and law school, so that she could afford to attend, and fought for every career opportunity that came her way. Today she works to bring those opportunities to low-income young people in her role as executive director of Public Allies Chicago, launched by Michelle Obama in 1993. The purpose of Public Allies, now a nationwide nonprofit (the Chicago branch was its second), is to prepare people ages 18 to 30 for careers in public service by setting them up in a 10-month fellowship with various nonprofit organizations.

Oliver began her career as a civil rights lawyer but says she became frustrated that she could make change happen only "one case at a time." Switching her focus to public service, she took a fellowship with the Chicago Community Trust, a foundation that provides grants to the city's nonprofits. "I've always felt like nonprofit work was in my DNA," she says. For a research project during her fellowship year, Oliver traveled the country interviewing social justice leaders. "They had so much wisdom to share, but I kept thinking, Who's going to take over this fight when they leave?" she says. "I wanted to find young people who are passionate about social change and give them the training they need to make a real difference in the world."

She is particularly focused on making that difference for children: In this year's program, 17 fellows (called Allies) are working in youth-focused nonprofits; collectively, those nonprofits serve more than 70,000 children in the Chicago area. "Our Allies work on big-picture projects for these organizations, improving how they function," Oliver explains. "Our analogy is that not everyone at the Humane Society gets to pet the puppies. Somebody has to build the program that brings the puppies in. It might not be as much fun, but it has a more lasting impact."

Oliver's passion for education comes from her mother, who raised Oliver on her own. "Every young person needs someone to push her, to see something in her and say, 'You're smart. You can do this,'" Oliver says. "That is life altering. That's what we do at Public Allies."

Ingrid Cook

Nurse practitioner at Baton Rouge Children's Health Project

BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA

COOK NEVER QUITE knows what her day will bring when her Big Blue Bus pulls up at one of the 10 public schools in East Baton Rouge Parish each morning. She might give annual physicals or figure out that a child's

STYLING: VANESSA MOORE FOR ART DEPARTMENT; HAIR: AYUMI YAMAMOTO AT DE FACTO USING NUMBER 4 HAIR PRODUCTS; MAKEUP: MISHA SHAHZADA AT SEEMANAGEMENT.COM USING CHANEL ROUGE COCO; MANICURE: MICHELLE MATTHEWS USING CHANEL VERNIS AT RONA REPRESENTS. ON BUSH: DRESS: AKRIS; RING: HER OWN. ON JONES-MUELLER: TOP: COS; PANTS: JIL SANDER; RING: HER OWN



"For many busy families, fast food is how they get dinner on the table. We've got to give our kids better choices at those venues."

—Anita Jones-Mueller

"I wanted to find young people who are passionate about social change and give them the training they need to make a real difference in the world."—Darlene Oliver





“It’s so disheartening to see a bright, beautiful child and know his basic needs aren’t being met.”

—Ingrid Cook



“What these children need most is a connection to a stable, supportive adult. But this isn’t just about helping a child. It has helped us so much more.”

—Celeste Bodner

failing grades are due to his inability to see the blackboard. But Cook and her team are prepared for anything, because the bus, a joint project of Our Lady of the Lake Children's Hospital in Baton Rouge and a national nonprofit called the Children's Health Fund, is a medical clinic on wheels. And Cook's job, since she became the bus's clinical leader in 2012, has been to care for children in some of Louisiana's poorest neighborhoods. When school is in session, Cook and her coworkers (a licensed practical nurse, a health educator) set up shop at a different school in the district each day. On weekends Cook holds health fairs at community centers around the city. Ninety-nine percent of the children Cook treats live in poverty, and she and her team will be the only medical professionals many of them will see all year. "Most have Medicaid, but they might not have a ride to a doctor's office," she says. "Or the copays for a sports physical are too expensive because Medicaid doesn't always cover that. So without us, these kids wouldn't be able to participate in school sports."

One memorable case was the eight-year-old Cook first saw for his chronic asthma. "He was missing school because he didn't have an inhaler," she says. "He also had terrible eczema. And on the day I met him, he didn't have socks. It's so disheartening to see a bright, beautiful child and know his basic needs aren't being met." Cook prescribed an inhaler (which is covered by Medicaid, so she could dispense it right on the bus) and gave him lotion for the eczema. And at each of his checkups, she sends home clean socks, toothbrushes and sometimes even a backpack for him or one of his siblings.

Her passion for pediatric health care began after the birth of her daughter in 1996. "I was a single mom, and my baby had asthma, ear infections and pretty much every contagious disease possible. So I know how comforting it is when a provider can tell a mother, 'You're doing a great job,'" she says. In her spare time, Cook serves as the reserve pediatric specialty leader for the Navy Nurse Reserve Corps and has been on humanitarian missions to Haiti, the Philippines, Indonesia and Costa Rica. She also sponsors two children in a Haitian orphanage. "We don't have a perfect system in the United States by any means," she says, "but seeing the situation in Haiti has made me so grateful for the resources we do have."

Celeste Bodner

Founder and executive director of FosterClub

SEASIDE, OREGON

NINETEEN YEARS ago, Bodner's husband hired a day laborer to work on a house he was remodeling in their neighborhood. Two boys, sons of the laborer's girlfriend, visited him at the construction site often. One day the laborer stopped showing up to work—but the boys, then ages 10 and 12, kept coming around. Bodner tried to track down the boys' mother, to no avail. "It got to the point where the boys would stay for dinner or even spend the night with us because we couldn't find a responsible adult to take them home," Bodner says. "Finally, we called Child Protective Services, and when CPS asked them for the most stable adults in their life, they named us." It turned out that the boys had started sleeping in a shed behind the Bodners' property because their parents had abandoned them, and the shed was the only safe place they knew. The Bodners agreed to serve as emergency foster parents. "We thought, OK, we can do this for a month or two," she says. Instead, the boys stayed on—and Bodner's life was transformed.

"My husband and I received 40 hours of training before we became foster parents, but these kids get thrown into the system without so much as a brochure," Bodner says. As she got to know the boys better, Bodner realized that they desperately needed a way to connect with other foster kids. So in 1999 she founded FosterClub, first as a website to connect "youth in care" (the current term for foster kids) and then as a nonprofit organization that helps kids in the system to advocate for themselves. FosterClub now has more than 35,000 members online (all kids under 18), as well as a network of 500 youth leaders—young people who either are in the system or have recently graduated from it. FosterClub has also helped pass legislation at the state and federal levels to make the system work better. "What these children need most is a connection to a stable, supportive adult," says Bodner. "But I've realized that this isn't just about helping a child. It has helped us so much more. It's how our family was made."

VIRGINIA SOLE-SMITH's last story for *More* was "The Legacy of Campus Rape." ***@v_solesmith***

HOW YOU CAN HAVE MORE IMPACT

SCORES OF organizations around the world are doing the important work of helping children, so we asked the women profiled in this piece to tell us which ones they particularly admire.

CASEY FAMILY PROGRAMS "Their goal is to shorten the amount of time a child spends in the foster system," says Celeste Bodner of this Seattle-based organization. *casey.org*

CHICAGO SCHOLARS It provides college-admissions support to underserved students in Chicago. "Their president is a dynamo!" says Darlene Oliver. *chicagoscholars.org*

ELIZABETH GLASER PEDIATRIC AIDS FOUNDATION This Global Health Corps partner, recommended by Barbara Bush, has provided 20 million women with services to prevent the transmission of HIV. *pedaids.org*

DANITA'S CHILDREN HOPE FOR HAITI CHILDREN'S CENTER "Danita Estrella Watts has built the only children's hospital in Haiti," says Ingrid Cook, who sponsors two children from the nonprofit's orphanage. *danitaschildren.org*

STUART FOUNDATION Bodner admires its Education Equals Partnership program, a five-year, $10 million, California-wide effort to increase academic performance and graduation rates for children in the foster system. *stuartfoundation.org*

SUPER KIDS NUTRITION INC. Anita Jones-Mueller loves it because the website is full of tips, tools and recipes to get kids excited about eating healthy. *superkidsnutrition.com*

ON OLIVER: DRESS: COS; SHOES: MANOLO BLAHNIK. ON COOK: TOP: COS; PANTS: CALVIN KLEIN JEANS; SHOES: MANOLO BLAHNIK. ON BODNER: TOP: TOMAS MAIER; RING: HER OWN

THE STORIE BEHIND THE PHOTOS

THE FIRST LADY OPENS HER ALBUM TO *MORE* READERS, TELLING EDITOR-IN-CHIEF **LESLEY JANE SEYMOUR** (AND US!) HER PRIVATE THOUGHTS ABOUT SOME OF HER FAVORITE WHITE HOUSE MOMENTS



A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

Here we are behind the scenes on the night of the inauguration in 2009. What most people don't realize is that there is not one inaugural ball but 10 separate events. So we would walk out, our song would play, we would dance, and then we would move to a freight elevator on our way to the next ball. There were quite a few held all over the Convention Center—to save my feet, they had a golf cart to shuttle us. It was a long, freezing-cold January night, and at 2 AM we were welcomed to our new home by friends and family. It was a great thing to be around so many familiar faces. The next morning, we were up early for a special service at the National Cathedral. After that, we returned to the White House and greeted visitors. So it was a long weekend … a long weekend, but memorable.

S



WHERE IT ALL STARTED



This was taken right before our new life was about to kick off. We are on the front porch of our house in Chicago before I left for work and Malia and Sasha went on their way to school. I picked this because I can't believe how much they've grown. And look how young Barack looks; when the kids see this photo, they say, "Dad looks too young to even *have* kids." We still come back when we have the time or opportunity. But the girls are young women now, with their own lives, and they're busy with friends and studying, one getting ready to look at colleges, one on her way to high school. As the kids get older, they just have less time for us. But we have really fond memories of Chicago, and some of our best friends still live in the area. This is still home for us.

THE FIRST VICTORY



Here I'm listening to Barack's victory speech right after the primary in South Carolina, when he won overwhelmingly. For every primary, you knock on doors, go by beauty shops, leaving no stone unturned in every city in every state. And once a primary is over, you barely have a moment to celebrate before you are on to the next state. I picked this photo because that night I was surrounded by my girlfriends, some of whom were there helping out in the primary, some of whom had flown to Columbia. I spent the night sitting on a hotel floor talking, enjoying french fries and chicken wings, with some of the most important women in the world to me.

PHOTOS, PAGES 121 AND 122: CALLIE SHELL/AURORA PHOTOS; OPPOSITE, FROM TOP: OFFICIAL WHITE HOUSE PHOTO BY PETE SOUZA; OFFICIAL WHITE HOUSE PHOTO BY CHUCK KENNEDY



DOWNHILL RACERS

Our very first snow—a snowstorm, actually—at the White House, not long after the inauguration in 2009. It was February, and Sasha and Malia had a snow day. It almost never snows this much in Washington. That day everything in the city was shut down. So the girls were home. We had just moved in, and understandably nobody on staff was ready for young kids or sleds. So we borrowed lunch trays from the White House Mess, the engineers poked holes in them—and out we went. We were sledding on the South Lawn, which has a much more significant hill than you'd think. See how little the girls are? Look at Sasha.



THEY ALSO SERVE

Jill Biden and I launched **Joining Forces**—here we are on a multistate tour. This was shot at a military base, Camp Lejeune in North Carolina, when we were visiting wounded warriors. But we also held a baby shower there for military spouses; it's one of the things nonprofit organizations around the country do for expectant mothers whose loved ones are deployed. This one was massive—we brought in gifts and diapers as a surprise. We wanted to highlight the fact that there are wonderful organizations that do this on a regular basis for military families, one of the small ways that one can have an impact. It doesn't take much, but it means a great deal to these moms, many of whom are in their early twenties and are having their first child—sometimes without their husbands around.

FASHION DAY, 2014

This was a fashion-education workshop. It was a very hands-on experience for young people. Here, Maria Cornejo is walking the kids through how to conceptualize a line. Alexis Bittar told them about jewelry design; Zac Posen taught the students about draping—all in the State Dining Room. I chose this photo because it is an example of how we've tried to open up the White House to more people—in particular, kids. Some Americans are fortunate to be invited to events at the White House multiple times in their lives. I try to think about all the kids who never set foot in these hallways. So now for every big event, we ask the entertainers to spend some time talking with young people, who come as invited guests and get to sit in these rooms where history was made.



A FAMILY BIRTHDAY

Staff here is so important—and wonderful. We were celebrating assistant usher Reggie Dickson's birthday. In the White House, we're surrounded by a whole lot of people who love and support us—from the ushers to the butlers to the chefs to the gardeners who take care of the beehive, who look out for our dogs, Bo and Sunny. These are the people who will see me in my pajamas without makeup, and they just don't think anything of it. They are discreet. They are loving. And they're extremely professional. We couldn't do this without them. And that's been true for so many of the First Families. When Jenna Bush was here last, she spent time with Buddy Carter, one of the butlers. They still have a close relationship—he visits the Bushes. These are people you live with. They are like family.



PHOTOS, THIS PAGE, FROM TOP: OFFICIAL WHITE HOUSE PHOTO BY CHUCK KENNEDY; OFFICIAL WHITE HOUSE PHOTO BY PETE SOUZA. OPPOSITE: OFFICIAL WHITE HOUSE PHOTO BY AMANDA LUCIDON; OFFICIAL WHITE HOUSE PHOTO BY SAMANTHA APPLETON



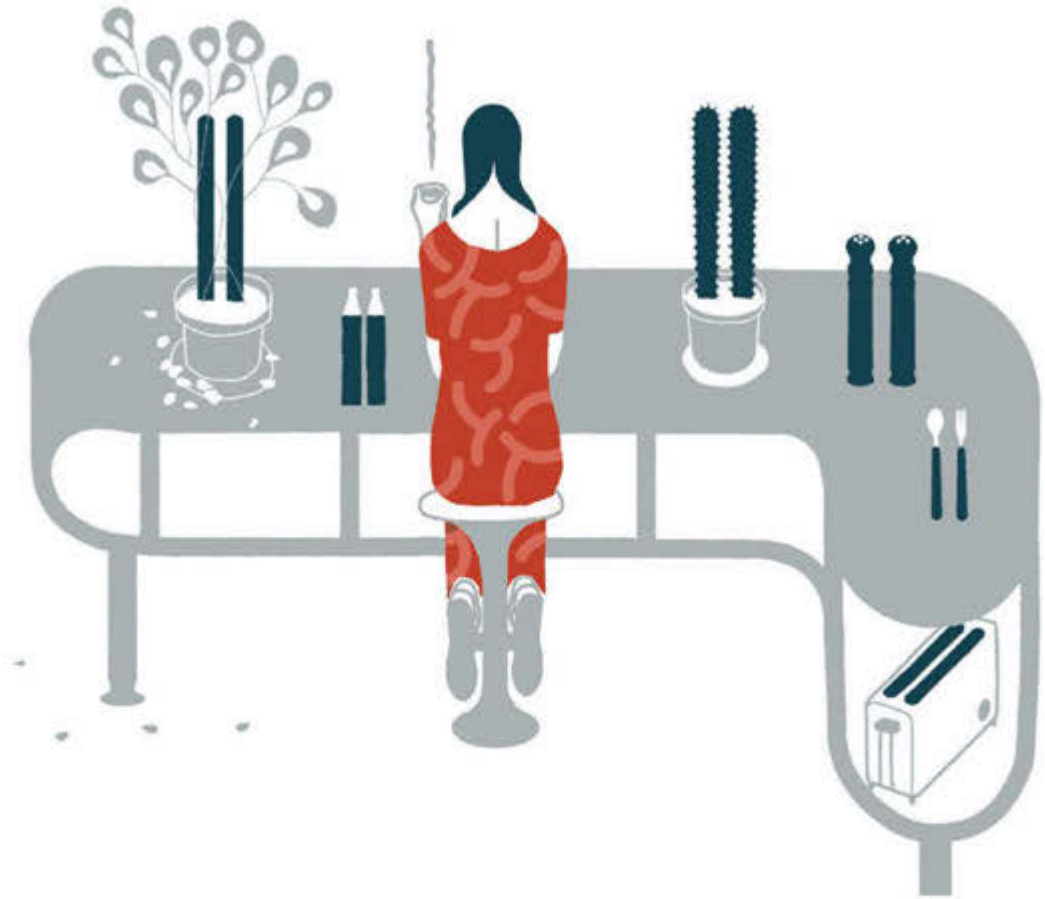
A MOMENT ALONE IN CHINA

This is one of my favorite shots—the Great Wall, unmistakable. We crammed a lot into a weeklong visit in 2014: Beijing, the famous Terra Cotta Warriors in Xi'an, Chengdu. My mother and children joined me, and there is something wonderful about seeing the sights with them. One of the things we try to do when we travel is to find ways to share the trip with young people back home. In Beijing, we did a teleconference with students at the University of Peking and Stanford University. It was fascinating to watch them interact with each other. There might be a language barrier and cultural differences, but I think students figure they have more in common than they realize. It also opens their eyes to the possibility of studying abroad and how exciting that can be.



GENERATIONS ON THE MOVE

The District Six Museum in Cape Town, where we are here, helps families piece together the lives they had before the displacement of apartheid. My mom was with us in South Africa. She had not traveled much—so this is something she never thought she would do. When I look back at our travels—from meeting the Pope to meeting the Queen of England to talking with Nelson Mandela at his house with my daughters to doing push-ups with Bishop Desmond Tutu—being able to share those experiences with the generations of Robinson-Obama women has been very special. As in China, we made a point of communicating with kids in the U.S. in the hope it will open them up to thinking about studying abroad or learning to be citizens of the world, which is what we're trying to do with our girls.



Move your toaster, change your health

You can trick yourself into eating better and exercising more by switching around your kitchen, dining room and office

IF YOU'VE BEEN relying on your willpower to make you eat salad for lunch every day, you're banking on a mental resource that's bound to run out. Recent research shows that willpower comes in finite quantities. When you force yourself to do one healthy act, you may have trouble summoning the energy to do something else you know is good for you. That's because your stores of self-discipline have dwindled. "Then you're more likely to, say, grab a Snickers bar and a bag of Doritos and wash them down with Coke," says longevity expert Dan Buettner, author of *The Blue Zones Solution*. What's stronger than willpower? Buettner, along with an increasing number of other researchers, believes you can significantly boost your health and life span by changing your physical and social environment in specific ways that will lead you to make good choices.

What changes would be most productive? For ideas, Buettner looked at what he calls the world's Blue Zones—areas like Sardinia and Okinawa, where people lead exceptionally long lives—and brought some of their practices to a few U.S. cities. The changes included tapping elderly people to walk students to school (instead of having parents drive them), promoting the consumption of produce by expanding community gardens, encouraging restaurants to offer healthier food and banning smoking on beaches.

The results? After two years, three California cities near Los Angeles (Manhattan Beach, Hermosa Beach and Redondo Beach) reported a 14 percent drop in obesity and a 30 percent decrease in smoking. Similarly, when researchers from the Cornell Food and Brand Lab implemented simple switches with students, such as presenting the healthiest meal choice first in cafeterias, young people ate 25 percent more veggies. »

ILLUSTRATED BY *Pablo Amargo*

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The scaffolding that supports better decision making must be erected long before you're faced with temptation—for instance, when you're organizing your kitchen, shopping for groceries, decorating your office and cultivating new friendships. "Once you put these changes in place, they will produce a positive health impact that can last for years and years," says Buettner.

Here is how you can create change from the outside in.

REARRANGE YOUR KITCHEN

HIDE THE BAD FOODS AND SHOWCASE THE GOOD ONES The only food you should see when you walk into your kitchen is fruit. But if you keep a box of breakfast cereal in plain view, you'll weigh, on average, 20 pounds more than someone who stores the package behind closed doors, according to research at the Cornell Food and Brand Lab. "We think of cereal as low in fat and fortified with vitamins and minerals, so we assume it's no big deal to grab a handful whenever we want," says Brian Wansink, PhD, the Cornell lab leader. But those calories add up.

TAKE CARE WHEN YOU SHELVE FOOD ITEMS You are three times as likely to eat the first food you see as you are to eat the fifth one, says Wansink, author of *Slim by Design*. So push the Nutella to the back of the cupboard and keep the quinoa up front. In the refrigerator, move the produce from the crisper bin to a shelf that is at eye level.

BANISH THE TOASTER "Every day it asks you, Hey, do you want a piece of toast? Or how about an English muffin or a bagel?" says Wansink. People who keep their toasters on the counter weigh, on average, seven pounds more than those who don't, according to research at Cornell. Hide yours in a closet so you'll need to drag it out to use it.

MINIATURIZE You may have heard this before, but it bears repeating: Eat your meals on smaller plates. There's an optical illusion that makes you perceive amounts as larger when they take up most of the available space (making your portion seem bigger is important because Americans like plates to be 75 percent full). By the same reasoning, swap the soup spoon for an espresso spoon before you dig into the Ben & Jerry's.

CREATE A SERENE SPACE "Clutter makes us tense," says environmental psychologist Sally Augustin, PhD, a fellow of the American Psychological Association and a principal at Design with Science. For a relaxing kitchen, use calming colors such as light sage green, mellow yellow or peach, and emphasize curves in the decor—oval table, rounded pot hooks, circular stove hood. Avoid cabinets with glass panes that reveal the chaos inside. Simple stress-reducing moves like these may help you make better food choices: A 2013 study in *Physiology & Behavior* found that stress may change the brains of women in ways that predispose them to poor eating habits.



Post pictures of fruit. Reminders of healthy food **may inspire you to make better choices**. A 2013 study found that dieters who saw images like a banana being peeled consumed a third fewer calories the next time they ate.



BECOME A SMARTER FOOD SHOPPER

SWITCH UP YOUR CART "Typically, fruits and vegetables make up a quarter of what we buy, but you can trick yourself into turning that proportion into half," says Wansink. When you first grab a shopping cart, divide it into two equal parts with your scarf or umbrella. On one side, put fruits and vegetables (fresh, frozen or canned are all good); on the other, place everything else. Since people tend to equalize two halves, the visual cue will subtly prod you to get more healthy stuff into your shopping cart.

SUCK ON A MINT OR CHEW GUM WHILE SHOPPING A 2013 study in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* concluded that shoppers who are hungry buy 45 percent more high-calorie foods than shoppers who are not. "Chewing gum takes the edge off your appetite and stops you from sampling," advises Jennifer McDaniel, a registered dietitian and spokesperson for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

HANG OUT IN THE BEAN SECTION "People roll their eyes," says Buettner. "But for every one cup of beans you eat per day, your life expectancy goes up by 15 percent." Legumes are high in fiber, which makes you feel full, and they promote healthy gut bacteria. They also tend to keep you away from the "junkier protein," such as red meat, that contains saturated fat. Eating more beans is linked to a lower risk of colon cancer, heart disease and diabetes. Find a few terrific recipes and use a slow cooker to create tender, flavorful and nutritious bean dishes.

SAVOR YOUR MEALS

CLEAR OFF THE TABLE If yours is a repository for mail, receipts, etc., move them somewhere else and make the table for eating only. This encourages you to sit down and focus on your food. According to a 2013 study in *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, compared with attentive eaters, inattentive eaters (those distracted by watching TV or reading) consume somewhat more during meals and considerably more two hours later.

PLAY GENTLE MUSIC AND USE SOFT LIGHTING A study from the Cornell Food and Brand Lab found that people ate 18 percent less when a restaurant dimmed its lights and switched to milder music. The calming atmosphere helped them eat more slowly—and

MADE YOU LOOK.

(and yes, she's wearing them)





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FINDINGS



once the food got cold, it wasn't as appealing, so they put down the fork, explains Wansink. And with the new ambience, diners reported enjoying their meals more.

STRETCH OUT MEALTIMES This happens effortlessly when you eat with other people because you spend a lot of time talking. But you can do this deliberately when you're alone by pausing between bites. "Satiety happens in one of two ways," explains Malissa Wood, MD, codirector of the Women's Heart Health program at Massachusetts General Hospital and a coauthor of *Thinfluence*. "Either you eat so much your stomach is full, or you eat less but over a longer period of time." In the latter case, your rising blood sugar and stretching stomach signal the brain that you're filling up, which leads to the release of satiety hormones even though you haven't eaten as much overall. So nibble; don't inhale.

AT A RESTAURANT, SIT OUT IN THE OPEN Being tucked away in a corner booth of a restaurant prompts people to order heavy comfort foods—"more wings and dessert," says McDaniel. Those seated by the window, who may be aware that passersby are checking them out, order more salads and fewer cocktails. Second best: a table in the middle of the restaurant, where people tend to order more vegetarian options because their neighbors may see what they're eating.

MAKE YOUR WORKPLACE HEALTHIER

FIND A DIFFERENT WAY TO COMMUTE You can't change the distance to your workplace, but you can alter how you get there. Walking or biking is best; each can lower your cardiovascular risks by 11 percent. If neither is feasible, take a bus or train. You'll still walk more door to door than the average car commuter.

SET UP DIFFERENT WORKSTATIONS Varying your position throughout the day calls on different muscle groups and lessens the harmful impact of too much sitting, which is associated with cardiovascular disease and early death. Find a way to stay on your feet, perhaps by clearing off the top of a filing cabinet "so you can sometimes work sitting down

CREATING GREEN
OASES IN FOOD DESERTS

ABOUT 30 million Americans live in "food deserts," places without adequate access to fresh, healthy and affordable food choices. These neighborhoods are filled with convenience stores and fast-food joints rather than well-stocked supermarkets. More than half the residents in food deserts have low incomes, and these areas have above-average obesity rates of 30 percent.

The federal government's Healthy Food Financing Initiative has channeled more than $140 million in grants to underserved low-income communities for projects that bring healthier food to the deserts by, for instance, putting produce in convenience stores and starting farmers' markets. "There's been a real sea change in the enthusiasm for this work since the First Lady took on the issues of childhood obesity and access to healthy food," says John Weidman, deputy executive director of the Food Trust, a Philadelphia nonprofit. The Trust has opened 27 farmers' markets throughout the city.

While access to healthy food is a critical first step, people must also be taught how to turn produce into delicious, well-balanced meals. Cooking demonstrations provide help. When the Food Trust's farmers' market chefs recently showed off recipes like cabbage slaw, "we had about 100 people watching. Many came back the next week to talk about what happened when they tried it at home," says Weidman.

The impact of such efforts is measurable and gratifying. Once considered home to some of the worst food deserts in the country, "Philadelphia has been one of the first cities to see a decline in childhood obesity rates," Weidman notes.

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HOW YOU CAN HAVE MORE IMPACT

INSPIRED BY THE *LET'S MOVE!* INITIATIVE

THE FIRST LADY'S *Let's Move!* initiative combats childhood obesity by encouraging kids to exercise more and eat healthier foods. One way to increase kids' enjoyment of vegetables: Help them grow their own. Many veggies, such as the ones below, are surprisingly easy to cultivate, says Sonia Uyterhoeven, the New York Botanical Garden's gardener for public education.

- **CHERRY TOMATOES** "They're the easiest tomatoes to grow and are really prolific," Uyterhoeven says. The widely available Sun Gold tomatoes are exceptionally sweet.
- **KALE** Everyone is talking about it, and if you grow your own, you will save money and have a bigger selection. Uyterhoeven recommends lacinato kale, which has a softer texture and milder flavor than other kinds.
- **SUMMER SQUASH AND ZUCCHINI** "Because they are so easy to grow, they are great confidence boosters," says Uyterhoeven.
- **RADISHES** These are gratifying because they grow so quickly: If you sow them directly into the garden, you'll be able to harvest vegetables in 25 to 35 days. If you have hot summers, you may need to wait until early fall to grow radishes.
- **MUSTARD GREENS AND LETTUCES** Most of these require cool weather. Still, if you have morning sun and afternoon shade, a heat-resistant mustard such as mizuna may do fine. Mizuna is a "cut and come again" vegetable—if you cut off leaves, they'll grow back, giving you more than one harvest.

and sometimes standing up," says Augustin. Treadmill desks are desirable but unusual in most workplaces. Instead, try to incorporate certain types of work into your regular treadmill routine. You can probably read, clean out emails or do research via smartphone or tablet while walking at a moderate pace.

GREEN YOUR WORKSPACE Put some foliage on your desk. Indoor plants have been shown to lower office workers' blood pressure. Personal photos are helpful, too. "We like to signal who we are to others," says Augustin. By contrast, she says, policies that require workers to keep their desks clean and clear "are extremely stressful to people."

POST PICTURES OF FRUIT Reminders of healthy foods may inspire you to make better choices at the vending machine. A 2013 study in the journal *Appetite* found that dieters who saw images like a banana being peeled consumed a third fewer calories the next time they ate. "Exposure to foods associated with weight management may act as an instant reminder of long-term goals and can help some women control their short-term food intake," says the study's lead author, Nicola Buckland, PhD, a researcher at the University of Leeds in the U.K.

RETHINK YOUR SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

CREATE A HEALTHIER PEOPLE NETWORK "You don't want to dump all your old friends, but if you sit on the couch and eat cupcakes and drink mochas when you're together," says Buettner, you may want to add more-positive influences to your circle. "You can cultivate a vegan friend, a walking friend, a positive, supportive friend," he says. Suggests Wood: "Form a walking group or find a Meetup of people who want to kayak or run or cross-country ski." Our pals' behaviors have a tremendous influence on our own. One 2012 study found that women who eat together match each other bite for bite, while another found the same thing happens with sips of drinks. That goes for physical activity, too. "So often we pick something up after seeing someone else do it first," says Wood. Spend time with sneaker-wearing types who might inspire you to give SoulCycle or a barre workout the old college try.

MEET YOUR NEIGHBORS Studies show that friendlier neighborhoods may improve adults' health and well-being and lower their psychological distress. The social support—from commiserating over the horrific heat to being able to borrow an egg when you're baking a cake—leads to the feel-good effect. But don't rely on simply texting or Facebooking: In Blue Zones, says Buettner, socializing and exercising are intertwined, because friends live within walking distance. So be sure to leave the house and do some face-to-face, real-life interacting.

TAKE IN THE OUTDOORS

BECOME A GARDENER Growing your own produce gets you outside in the fresh air, keeps you moving and provides healthy ingredients for your kitchen. Digging in the dirt may also boost your mood through a surprising mechanism. The common soil bacterium *Mycobacterium vaccae* causes neurons to produce serotonin, which creates an antidepressant effect. That's been demonstrated in mice and cancer patients. City dwellers can look into community gardens. (For tips on the easiest veggies to grow, see "How You Can Have More Impact," left.)

VACATION IN AN ACTIVE ENVIRONMENT Consider trips that allow for hiking, paddleboarding or snorkeling, even if you plan to spend the bulk of the time lying on the beach sipping mai tais. Some hotel chains, such as Westin, now let you rent workout gear, so you don't even need to pack your sneakers.

SLATHER ON A MINTY LOTION Scent research has shown that if you smell peppermint while you're working out, you won't feel as if you've exercised as hard as you really did. "The scent of peppermint stimulates an area of your brain known as the reticular activating system," explains Bryan Raudenbush, PhD, a psychology professor at Wheeling Jesuit University. "This is the part that wakes us up and puts us to sleep. Greater stimulation in this area seems to draw your attention away from how hard you're working out, so it seems easier." After your postworkout bath or shower, use lavender or vanilla scents to help you relax.

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WELL-BEING

WHAT'S UP, WHAT'S DOWN

BUTTER ▲ **8.1%**

AT THE CHECKOUT

MARGARINE ▼ **2.1%**

SALES OF BUTTER, which many people say tastes better than margarine, are at a 40-year high. The long-standing fear that saturated fats like butter are unhealthy is apparently fading. "New studies show that there's no connection between eating saturated fat and developing heart disease," says Mark Hyman, MD, director of the Cleveland Clinic Center for Functional Medicine. At the same time, margarine is at its lowest popularity in 70 years. Why the plunge? It's partly because Americans tend to view margarine, made with hydrogenated vegetable oils and emulsifiers, as an artificial product, according to the research firm Euromonitor. The above sales figures, from Nielsen, cover the years 2010 to 2014.

15.3% **THE PERCENTAGE** of adult American women who smoked in 2013, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It's the lowest rate since the government began keeping records in 1965.

MRS. OBAMA'S CHILL-OUT PLAYLIST

HERE'S WHAT Michelle Obama tunes in to.

1. **"Bravo"** by Ledisi
2. **"Thinkin Bout You"** by Frank Ocean
3. **"I Was Here"** by Beyoncé
4. **"So Fly"** by Elle Varner
5. **"Beautiful"** by Me'Shell Ndegeocello
6. **"Overjoyed"** by Stevie Wonder
7. **"Safe with Me"** by Sam Smith
8. **"Up and Away"** by Tomás Pagán Motta
9. **"Gravity"** by Sara Bareilles
10. **"Love Is the Answer"** by Aloe Blacc
11. **"A Love Supreme, Part 1"** by John Coltrane
12. **"Blue in Green"** by Miles Davis
13. **"When I Was Your Man"** by Bruno Mars
14. **"He Won't Go"** by Adele
15. **"Say Something"** by A Great Big World and Christina Aguilera
16. **"Cheek to Cheek"** by Tony Bennett and Lady Gaga

THE DIRT ON YOUR DRUGS

WHAT DO you get when a former Google engineer and a past executive editor of *Wired* team up to dish on the pharma industry? Iodine.com, a free site that provides important info about your medicine, such as how most users rate it, the likelihood of experiencing various side effects and the way the medicine affects your condition, all in simple language. If some of the *other* medical sites you visit are overly jargony, try a Google Chrome extension that acts as a translator. Just hover over the words in question, and you will receive a definition or synonym in plain English (for example, *epistaxis* becomes *nosebleed*).

GOOD MOVE

Stand up straighter

IF YOU spend hours a day hunched over a computer, you may end up with a rounded upper back—a condition associated with weak and painfully tight muscles in the neck, shoulders and spine area. Locust pose, a basic yoga position, can combat aches and poor posture by stretching and strengthening those muscles.



>>> Lie on stomach, forehead on floor, arms reaching behind your back. Keep legs close to each other. On an inhale, lift head, chest and legs off floor; think of broadening your chest through your collarbones. Stay lifted for 3 to 5 breaths, resting on lower ribs, stomach and front pelvis. Gaze forward, making sure you don't scrunch your neck. Lower and repeat 3 to 5 times.

Source: Tiffany Cruikshank, founder of Yoga Medicine



BOOK OF THE MONTH

THE GRATITUDE DIARIES *by Janice Kaplan.* You've heard that keeping a gratitude journal—writing down three things a day that you're thankful for—boosts your sense of well-being. But does it work? In an inspiring, yearlong test, veteran journalist Kaplan proves it actually does. She starts by expressing gratitude to her startled spouse. By the end of the experiment, she concludes, "I'd had the happiest twelve months I could remember."

WRITTEN BY SARA REISTAD-LONG

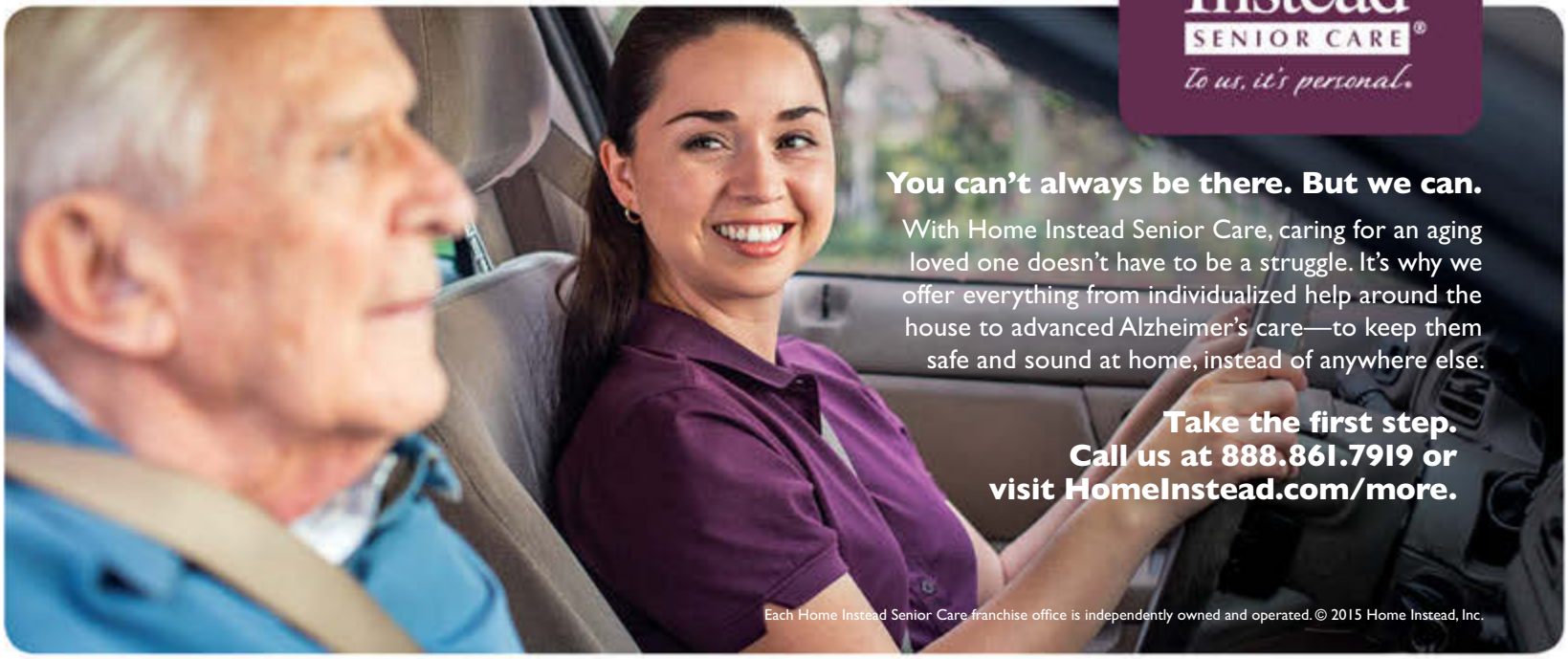
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MERYL STREEP AND MICHELLE OBAMA

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 85 dropping names!
MO: And [I'll bet he] was cute when he said it!
MS: He told me when he was a little bitty boy living in the part of working-class England where they built ships, Queen Elizabeth came to town for the Queen's jubilee. He had been excited for weeks about her visit; his family had a picture of the Queen in their house. He stood with his mum in the crowd, and as the Queen passed by in an open car doing the royal wave, she stopped waving for an instant and looked directly into his eyes. He said it was at that moment that he thought, Someday I want to be in a car like that . . .
MO: I don't want to be standing out here.
MS: It's interesting, that a little encounter like that could have such a big impact.

My legacy, I feel, is written by other people. Somehow it trails after me like tin cans tied to the back of a car—that all my award nominations and things like that are me. But when I think about what I really want to leave behind, I realize it's what my mother left me. For the people that I touched and cared about, I want it to matter to them that I was in their lives. I want my love for them to sustain them after I'm gone. I draw strength from my mother; I want them to draw strength from me. My legacy is personal to me. The bigger part of it—the Meryl Streep of it all—I kind of can't handle that.
MO: Meryl is too much for you?
MS: Yeah, it's too much. It's too much.
MO: Your mom could have handled it!

If you're not First Lady or a movie star, what's one thing a woman can do to have more impact in the world?

MS: Be a mindful shopper. Think about the impact your purchases make: Is what I buy good for the environment? Where is it made? How are the people who are making it treated? Those things make a difference.
MO: Be passionate about something and lean to that strength. I think that's what I've done. And I see that in women like Meryl. As Meryl says, it's those little conversations that you have with your kids, it's the small gestures, that can make the greatest impact. What you do in your family and in your community is as powerful as what Meryl does on the screen and what I do around the world. It's like my kids say: "You do you." That's where great things can happen.

FIRST GENERATION TO COLLEGE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 103 aren't the first in their family to go. "Suddenly I was in classes with prep school kids who were describing themselves as existentialists or Nietzscheans or discussing the merits of reading *Beowulf* in Old English," says Gordon, who attended Fordham University in the Bronx. "I had no clue what they were talking about." She was saved by the confidence she'd earned from being considered a smart kid in every public school she'd attended. "I didn't back down. I read, I talked to friends, I joined the staff of the student newspaper and began to figure out some of this stuff."

Today's first-generation students often come out of underperforming school districts, which may leave them struggling with basics such as reading, writing and math. "I'll have a lot of students come up to me when they're taking a multiple-choice exam and say, 'What does this word mean: *plethora*?' Their vocabulary just isn't as built up," says John Newbold, an associate professor of management and marketing at Sam Houston State University in Texas, a regional school where more than 60 percent of the students are first generation. He has conducted studies on their motivation, satisfaction, specific challenges and academic success. "I'm still shocked when I see the number of students who take six years to graduate," Newbold says.

The common-core standards, a set of learning goals in literacy and math published in 2010, aim to help all students in the U.S. become college ready so that fewer will face what Avery did when she decided to enroll in community college in the hope of becoming a medical assistant. "I had to take remedial this, remedial that, even a class on how to study. No one had ever taught me that," she says.

Obstacles encountered after arrival often stretch beyond the academic. "There was no

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one to guide me that first year," says Susan Beringer, 56, a nurse practitioner in New Hampshire. "I had *no* idea that orientation was an overnight—I showed up without my things and had to go home and get them. I had no idea how to procure financial aid. No one told me I wouldn't need *every* book listed in the syllabus!" Beringer worked her way through school, often rising at 4:45 in the morning after studying until 1 AM.

"What we hear most from kids is conveyed in the phrase 'Life happens,'" says Kim Cook, executive director of the National College Access Network, a nonprofit that provides support and advocacy for organizations working with underserved students. "'My car broke down, so I can't get to campus and I don't have the wiggle room in my budget to buy a new car or pay for an expensive repair.' Or 'I have a job and my employer changed my hours, so I can no longer attend that Wednesday class.'" Or something happens at home, often involving child care, or when a family member loses a job or gets sick.

These students frequently help support their parents, siblings or extended family, and being at college, where life is comparatively easy, can make them feel guilty that their loved ones are still suffering back home. Kornegay won some scholarships, which led to refund checks from her school that she could have put toward discretionary expenses such as those sorority fees. Instead, she sent the money home to her mother and sister. "Sometimes they wouldn't have food. I needed to help them out," she explains. And Mesku landed a work-study job paying $11.15 an hour, far more than she could have earned from an off-campus job. "I was using that money to help my parents pay their mortgage, until they couldn't anymore," she says. (The family eventually lost its home to foreclosure.)

In families with college experience and more resources, of course, parents or siblings can provide the emergency money, advice or encouragement the student needs, rather than the other way around. This is where other role models—you, perhaps?—come into play. Mentors or peers can take over that role, helping overburdened students navigate the campus system.

First-gen students may have it rougher than their peers, but that can also spur them to try harder. "What I found jarring was how little some students actually valued being in college," says Maria Gonzales, 47, who studied molecular and cell biology at UC Berkeley. "To them it was just a given and their chance to act like idiots." Now a senior partner at a San Francisco ad agency, Gonzales, whose parents emigrated from Mexico, gravitated toward less entitled, more focused classmates. "I tended to connect more with first-generation types, immigrants and others in academically rigorous majors," she says.

Laura Morowitz, a 48-year-old art-history professor at Wagner College, on Staten Island, New York, who earned her PhD at New York University, says college was a true intellectual awakening for her. "Clearly my professors loved what they did, and they were really alive," she says. "I realized you could model a life for yourself doing something you love and being part of a bigger, ambitious community of thinkers."

Morowitz had attributed her early, undergrad successes to the caliber of the school she attended, which she felt was not as rigorous or demanding as other institutions. "Once I began graduate school, I realized that was not the reason I'd succeeded," she says. "I was just as good as—or better than—students who came from 'better' schools. It's a realization that has been reinforced for me many times in my experience as a professor: There are brilliant students who come from very well educated parents, and brilliant students who've grown up with very little. Some of my best students have been those who are first generation."

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STYLE AND SUBSTANCE



MARIA CUOMO COLE, CHAIRMAN OF HELP USA AND PRODUCER OF SOCIAL-IMPACT FILMS, BELIEVES HELPING OTHERS—AND GETTING A BLOWOUT NOW AND THEN—LEADS TO A BEAUTIFUL LIFE. THIS IS WHAT 53 LOOKS LIKE

ON HER PASSION PROJECT "I work with the Help organization, which is among the largest developers of housing for veterans and victims of domestic violence … I believe everyone deserves a safe, decent place to live; that's a basic human right."

ON WHAT LED HER TO FILMMAKING "Twenty-three years ago, I met a woman who had overcome substance abuse and was raising three kids. She didn't earn enough to pay for housing, and then her son was murdered by random gunfire on the street. Help gave her a home in Brooklyn—and her story inspired my first long-form film, a documentary on gun violence [*Living for 32*]."

ON BEING HER FATHER'S DAUGHTER "My dad [the late Mario Cuomo, former governor of New York] defined so much for his children and team. He enlightened us and brought tremendous value to our lives. I realize now he was a human saint."

ON FALLING FOR A FASHION VIP "I was introduced to my husband [designer Kenneth Cole] by mutual friends in the '80s. He was just starting out and opening his flagship store. We had an immediate connection, and he cared deeply about the social issues that inspire me."

ON SOOTHING HER SENSITIVE SKIN "My secret is using natural products like safflower oil to wash my face. I have skin allergies, and it's gentle and hydrating."

ON BEAUTY INDULGENCES "Whenever my schedule allows, I like to get blowouts."

ON WHAT KEEPS HER MOTIVATED "I wake up every day and feel a sense of appreciation and responsibility. We're here—let's get to it."

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ENDNOTE



What women owe one another

BY MICHELLE OBAMA

When Barack was first running for President back in 2008, I made what I thought was an innocuous comment about how, if he were elected, my most important job would be "mom-in-chief." The response was swift and passionate. Some people thought this was great, a sign that I had my priorities in order and was doing what was right for my family. Some were less positive, concerned that I was devaluing my professional achievements and ambitions.

As for me, I was just confused. The way I saw it, embracing my role as mom-in-chief didn't mean dismissing what I'd accomplished in my career or shortchanging the important work of being First Lady—on the contrary, I planned to pour myself into the job and do everything I could to have a real impact on people's lives. I was just stating a simple truth: The most important thing in my life is raising my two daughters. That's been true for me since the day our older daughter was born, and as our girls grew from babies to toddlers to tiny people with opinions and personalities of their own, I realized that I had such a short window to be with them full time—so few years when I would be there when they woke up and went to sleep and would witness their daily struggles and joys in real time.

But somehow these nuances just didn't break through the media noise.

This conversation is nothing new or unusual. The truth is that too often, as women, we simply refuse to acknowledge the complexity of one another's lives. Even worse, we assign layers of meaning to other women's choices that may or may not have anything to do with what they're actually thinking or feeling: "She's underutilizing her professional skills and selling herself short" or "She's furthering her career at the expense of her family." But all those judgments and accusations are nothing but stories we impose on each other.

The real story is what happens as we each struggle, agonize, compromise and make the best decisions we can with the information and resources we have. And it's time that we all stepped back, took a deep breath and started really listening to one another rather than viewing one another through the layers of our own judgment, insecurity and anxiety. When we do that, we can finally start to understand the challenges other women are facing and the doubts they're wrestling with. Only then can we respond appropriately: with compassion, support and respect.

So whether we aspire to be a mom-in-chief, a chief operating officer, commander-in-chief of the United States or a couple of those at once, it's important for us all to remember that so many brave women before us fought to give us these choices—and now we shouldn't be criticizing each other for making them. If we keep fighting for basic workplace supports like paid leave and affordable child care, and we keep opening our hearts and minds to one another's experiences, then hopefully our daughters will have even greater freedom to pursue the lives they dream of.

Ultimately, there's no good or bad here, no right or wrong, feminist or antifeminist. There are only our unique, complicated and precious stories—may we all learn to embrace each other's and our own.

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